

ĀCĀRYA HRDAYAM

a critical study



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ĀCĀRYA HRDAYAM

(A CRITICAL STUDY)

BY

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WITH A FOREWORD BY

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A Word

In the galaxy of Visistadwaita philosophers, Nammalwar, the first and foremost among the Vaishnavaites Alvars and Acharyas, shines apart like a pole star. His contribution to Indian heritage in general and Tamil literature in particular through 'Tiruvaimozhi' which formed a part of 'Nalayiram' is monumental particularly with regard to his attempts to imbibe the Vedic and Upanishadic spirit in regional language which has been carried out by the successors of the hierarchy since the great Ramanuja.

'Acharya Hridayam' is a work of criticism by Azhagiya Manavala Nayenar of 13th century propounding the true conception that Nammalwar had about the Vedic literature. Here the commentator delves deep into the core of Nammalwar's many splendoured thoughts and brings an exuberant freshness to them.

Dr. Damodaran, M.A., Ph.D. of S. V. University who took this subject for his thesis has indeed done a meritorious service to the nation and particularly to Tamil literature by focussing the mind of the English knowing Indians on the cultural treasures that lie hidden in the ocean of Tamil literature of 'Sangam' depths.

Superfluous would it be to say more on this work which has a preface of the eminent educationalist, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyyer. It would be a great honour to the Devasthanams also if the book receives perennial patronage.

Tirupati }
13-7-76. }

P. S. RAJAGOPALA RAJU,
Executive Officer,
T. T. Devasthanams.

Foreword

I have glanced through Sri G. Damodaran's thesis on 'the Ācārya Hṛdayam.' It is an exposition of the specific doctrines and philosophy of the Vaishnavas (as successively developed) by the Ālṅvārs, the foremost of whom being Nammāḷwār. The author of this work was the brother of the founder of the Thenkalai sect Sri Pillai Lokacharya, and seems to have lived in the 14th century. The Ālṅvārs popularised and expounded the Visishtadvaita system of thought and their literary works were enshrined in the Nālāyira Divya Prabandams which, as Sri Ramanujacharya emphasises, are regarded as equally important with the Sanskrit scriptures.

These Prabandams have been successively commented upon by scholar Bhaktas but the Ācārya Hṛdayam was composed not merely to expound the ideas contained in the Thiruvaimozhi but to promulgate to a wide public what the author has regarded as their inner significance or its heart. The peculiarity of this work is the remarkable combination of Sanskrit and Tamil terminology and verbal and grammatical forms which is styled Maṇipravāḷam and which has been in vogue in the Tamil country (and later on in Kerala) through many centuries. It is stated that the Jains and Buddhists adopted this method to make their teachings more accessible to the general and non-scholarly public. Obviously the Vaishnava Acharyas were in the habit of delivering lectures in Tamil and being Sanskrit scholars their talk embodied

both Sanskrit and Tamil terms and modes up expression. The object of Ācārya Hṛdayam is to sum up such teachings and to embody in itself all the features contained in the commentary entitled 'Ītu'. The author Sri Damodaran points out that the author's desire was to see that Thiruvaimozhi and its contents should be understood by everybody. At the same time the author is obviously anxious to prove that Tamil is as capable as Sanskrit to express the highest philosophical and doctrinal ideals. It is, of course, well-known that the Āḷwārs belonged to various classes and communities from the highest to the lowest, Nammāḷwār himself belonging to the fourth Varna. The author insists that to examine the birth or caste of an Āḷwār is itself a great sin. Sri Damodaran specially refers to a verse of Thirmangai Āḷwār relating to 'Guha' the great friend of Sri Rama. These circumstances furnished a powerful motive to the inditing of a work which gives equal prominence to Tamil and to Sanskrit, and which transcends caste and community. The special characteristic of the Maṇipravāḷam style was the attainment of great verbal felicity and melody without impairing the innate characteristics of the Tamil and Sanskrit elements. It cannot be forgotten, in this context that in the matter of devotional literature, Tamil occupies a specially high position amongst the literatures of the world.

The advocacy of the Prapatti Mārga or complete surrender of the human soul to the Supreme Being (who is contemplated by turns as the Beloved, as an elder brother, as a parent and also as creator and sustainer of the world) may be regarded as a special characteristic of the Tamil Vaishnava literature and the Ācārya Hṛdayam is one of the authentic classics

developing this approach. It has been commented upon by Sri Maṇavāla Māmuni who was born in Āḷwār Tirunagari in the later half of the 14th century and was a voluminous writer. After a short life as a householder he assumed Sanyasa. He was a devotee of Sri Ramanuja and sang the Yatiraja Vimsathi in his praise. Living in Srirangam during the later part of his life he also visited holy places like Kancheepuram and seems to have lectured on Sri Ramanujacharyar's Sri Bashyam and later on he began to expound the Tiruvaimozhi.

The thesis contains a description of the merits and special features of Maṇavāla Māmuni's commentary on the Ācārya Hṛdayam. In short it may be stated that the thesis endeavours to appraise the Ācārya Hṛdayam and Maṇavāla Māmuni's commentary on it as vital and inspiring contributions to the doctrines and inner meanings of Vaishnava Philosophy. Sri Damodaran has demonstrated his wide range of scholarship and has in this work given proof of painstaking and meaningful research.

Sd. C.P. RAMASWAMI AIYER
Vice-Chancellor, Annāmalai University.
22-10-1964

Preface

Ācārya Hṛdayam is a sealed book for many a reader, be he a layman or a scholar, on account of the peculiarities of its style and language. It is written in Maṇipravāḷa style which is an admixture of Sanskrit and Tamil words. For a proper appreciation of this work, at least a working knowledge of Sanskrit is necessary. Knowing my limitations fully well, I have undertaken this work 'A Critical Study of Ācārya Hṛdayam' with a view to giving an exposition of the truths enshrined in that great work.

This is only an introduction to the study of Ācārya Hṛdayam in respect of its literary merits. The other aspects of this great work namely its philosophy and Mysticism are dealt with only to the extent necessary to understand its literary value. No attempt is made to give an exposition of the inner meaning of the Mantras, as a mere exposition without inter personal relations such as that of the Guru Sishya relation, cannot impart that knowledge completely.

On the basis of this thesis I was awarded the M. Litt. (Master of letters) degree of Annamalai University in the year 1963. I am particularly grateful to Thiru. T. M. Narayanasami pillai, then Vice-chancellor who advised me to choose this text as the subject of my thesis and encouraged me to pursue it. Dr. T. P. Meenakshisundaranar, then professor of Tamil and Head of the Departments of Tamil Arts and Linguistics, guided me at every step in the understanding of the

great work Ācārya Hṛdayam. He has indeed been my teacher, philosopher and guide. I am deeply indebted to him.

This book should have seen the light of day more than a decade ago. Indeed as early as 1964, Shri C. P. Ramasamy Aiyer, then Vice-Chancellor of Annamalai University graciously read through the book and blessed with a foreword. For some reason or the other it could not be published then.

There is no book in English on Vaiṣṇavism, especially one explaining the southern school of thought. Such a situation prompted me to pursue my venture vigorously. So in the year, 1973, I approached the authorities of the Tirumala-Tirupati-Devasthanams for its publication. They willingly accepted my offer. I therefore heartily thank Shri A. Valliyappan I. A. S., then Chairman, Board of trustees, T.T.D. and its Executive Officer Shri S. V. Subramaniam I A S, for their prompt and right action. I am also thankful to the present Executive Officer Shri P. S. Rajagopal Raju, B. A. B. L., and Sri C. Anna Rao, dynamic Chairman of the T. T. D. for their help in this regard.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my revered colleagues Prof. C. S. Venkateswaran and Prof. R. Ramanujachari of Annamalai University and friends Shri S. Visvanathan and Shri D. Rajaganeshan of S. V. University, for going through the manuscript and suggesting some improvements in its language. I am very grateful to the Annamalai University Vice-Chancellor and its syndicate for having given permission to publish my thesis in a book form. My indebtedness to the scholars in the field is indicated in the bibliography. Further I express my sincere thanks to the

pro-chancellor of the University, Raja Sir M.A. Muthiah Chettiar of Chettinad, for offering me an opportunity to be in the University for a decade and to qualify myself in the field of Research.

With pleasure and pride I dedicate this humble work of mine to my revered guru and Ācārya Shri B.R. Pūrusothama Naidu, Ex. Reader in Tamil, University of Madras, who is a true Vaiṣṇavite and an erudite scholar, able teacher, and an author of many religious treatises in Tamil.

TIRUPATI--2.

Dr. G. DAMODHARAN

13—4—76

INTRODUCTION

Ācārya Hṛdayam is one of the most important works which expounds the traditions of Vaiṣṇava religion and Philosophy. It also considers the inner meaning or secret enshrined in the three mantras of the Vaiṣṇavites and how far the four works of Nammālvār reflect those mantras. It is a marvellous and unique work. The title means 'The mind of the Ācārya or the spiritual master.' For the Vaiṣṇavites there is a succession of Ācāryas, the first and foremost among them being Nammālvār. So he is called the first Ācārya. Ālvārs were twelve in number and they lived probably between the 6th, century and 9th century A.D. 'As the name itself implies, the Ālvārs were expert divers in divinity and were deeply immersed in love (of God). Their poetic utterances were spontaneous outpourings of their intuitional experience of the Lord, especially in the easily accessible form of permanent incarnations or idols or *arcā*. They were born mystics, unlike the later Ācāryas who acquired their insight by the laborious process of self purification and contemplation.'¹ Though generally a distinction is made between the Ālvārs and the Ācāryas, even the Ācāryas themselves (10th to 14th centuries) accepted Nammālvār or Māṇan as their First Ācārya. His position is unique. He is said to be the body for which all the others are different organs or parts. So here the word Ācārya can be taken as referring to Nammālvār only. Our inference is strengthened by the fact that the work expounds mainly the verses of Nammālvār contained in his *Tiruvaymoli*. Of course quotations are also taken from the other work of Nammālvār, and verses from other Ālvārs and also from many other ancient works of name and fame. It is said that all the Ālvārs speak with one voice, so we can safely conclude that this work deals with 'the mind of Nammālvār' only.

The Author

The author of this work is Aḷakiyaṁaṇavāḷa Nāyanār, the youngest son of the famous Vatakkuttiruvṭippillai who wrote

1. Mystics and Mysticism by P. N. Srinivasachari – pp. 176-7.

the commentary on Tiruvāymoḷi, styled as *īṭṭu* or Thirty six thousand. We know nothing particularly about the birth and life of this great author, as is usual with regard to many an author of Tamil Classics. Muṭumpai is the name of the village where the author was born. Like his elder brother Sri Piḷḷai Lōkācārya who is generally considered as the founder of Tenkalaism, he remained a bachelor throughout his life. He lived in the latter half of the 13th century A.D. He should have lived along with his father in the North Street of Sriraṅkam. His works reveal his deep knowledge, learning of Sanskrit and Tamil and intense devotion to God and universal outlook on life. His original works are, apart from this work, one more work by the name 'Aruḷicceyal Rahasya.' He has written commentaries on *Tiruppāvai*, *Amalanātipirān* and *Kaṇṇinuṇ ciṟuttāmpu*. Some ascribe one 'Paṭṭōlai' also to him.

The Speciality

It is not far from truth to say that the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, itihāsas and purāṇās, the verses of Āḷvārs and the ślokas of Ācāryas, all together, took the shape of this treatise. It is said so because the author who was a well versed scholar in all these works has adopted a peculiar method in writing this work. He has taken phrases and words freely from all those works and combined them in his own way to express his ideas. This is a new venture and the author has succeeded in it to a great extent. His style is examined in a separate chapter in this thesis. It is enough to say here, that apart from its content, the words and their association give an exquisite delight to its readers. A list of works which formed the source of words and phrases for the author is given in appendix I.

Aims and objects of the work

All the verses of Āḷvārs were collected and collated by Nāta-muni who came after the Āḷvārs. That collection is named 'Aruḷicceyal' or 'Nālāyira Divya Prabandha'—a divine treatise of four thousand verses. This is held in very high esteem by the Vaiṣṇavites and is put on an equal footing with scriptures in Sanskrit. Sri Rāmānuja emphasised the need for learning both these varieties of scriptures. The vaiṣṇavites who learnt both and followed them were called Ubhaya Vēdāntins.

During the time of Rāmānuja the first commentary on Tiruvāymoḷi, the main work of Nammālvār, was written by Tirukkuru-kaippirāṇpiḷḷai a disciple of Rāmānuja. It is said that the latter hesitated very much to permit his disciple to write the commentary on the ground that it might lead people to under estimate the original verses. However, after the first commentary was released many more followed it. Altogether now there are five elaborate commentaries and two books of 'meanings for hard words.' Among those commentators periyavāccāṇ piḷḷai is the person who has commented on all the verses in Aruḷicceyal. But the elaborate commentary of Vaṭakkuttiruvītippiḷḷai called 'Thirty six thousand' on account of its containing the same number of granthas in it, is considered the most important. It is also called by the name 'īṭu.' It is a speciality of Vaiṣṇava religion to possess such superb commentaries on its devotional songs. Generally many holy traditions are explained in them; interesting and instructive anecdotes are narrated. They bring out clearly the philosophy and the literary excellence of the verses. As they were written by men of high spiritual experience, they create in the readers a intensity of devotion to God. The īṭu in special is very comprehensive. It uses apt words with condensed meaning. Many quotations are given from various other works in the course of the commentary. The explanations the author gives for his quotations are very rich and captivating. The continuity among the verses and the beauty of combination of words in the verses are pointed out in an extraordinarily brilliant manner. We find so many other virtues also in it. This commentary alone is spoken of as the 'Bhagavat Vishaya'—that which pertains to God - in the Vaiṣṇava tradition. It contains the various comments made by the Ācāryas during their discourses on these texts in the temple. The sweetness and literary beauty of the verses of Ālvār as explained by īṭu have attracted even philosophic scholars to the line of Ālvār.

The work under review is written on the lines of īṭu. As there was that beautiful īṭu in vogue, it may be asked where is the need for this new work? Nampiḷḷai, a great scholar, not only in Sanskrit but also in Tamil literature and grammar was giving discourses daily on Tiruvāymoḷi. His disciples Periya Vāccāṇ piḷḷai, vaṭakkuttiruvītippiḷḷai and others were taking down his speeches. Among the writings of all those persons, Sri Nampiḷḷai selected Vaṭakkuttiruvītippiḷḷai's writing as the best. But

he feared that if the writings were published then the people might neglect the original verses of Nammālvār. So he placed his writing which was called *īṭu* in his prayer shelf. He thought that it should be kept there only, as an object of reverence. It was not available for use to the public. In these circumstances, when the *īṭu* was not accessible to the public, this work which mainly follows *īṭu* perhaps came to be written. Professor T.P. Meenakshisundaranar mentioned that this opinion was expressed by the late lamented scientist scholar Dr. K.S. Krishnan. The same circumstances might have induced Kōneri Dāsyai also to write her treatise on the same subject. This is the impression held by the same Doctor. Anyhow there is no gain saying the fact that Ācārya Hṛdayam has come out to explain in a brief and clear manner the ideas enshrined in Tiruvāymoḻi and point out the mind of Nammālvār, its author. Though generally the author of this work follows strictly the earlier works and particularly the *īṭu*, the pattern of his presentation is different. His expression is direct, simple and precise and so easy to remember.

Variations with the earlier Ācāryas

In a very few instances, however, we find the author taking words from the Aruḷicceyal, and using them in a slightly different sense.

1. In the first sūṛṇai itself we come across the following passage (phrase) “மறையாய் விரிந்த துளக்கமில் விளக்கில் கொளுத்தின” meaning lighted from the steady light which blossomed into the Vedas. This has been formed by words taken from two different sources. They are, (1) “மீக்காண மறையாய் விரிந்த விளக்கை” from the verse of Tirumaṅkai Ālvār,² (2) “தோன்று சோதி மூன்றுமாய்த் துளக்கமில் விளக்கமாய்” from the verse of Tirumaḷicai Ālvār.³ By combining the two phrases underlined above, we get the above passage. We find the word ‘*viḷakku*’ (Light) in both the quotations referred to above. But in those two places the word has been used to denote God. The term ‘*Viḷakku*’ in *Ācārya Hṛdayam* denotes the first letter of the Tamil alphabet ‘A.’ Only that letter has

2. Periya. Tiru – 8, 9, 4.

3. Tirucca – V, 4.

blossomed into Vedas and not God. One may give the same meaning for this word in the two quotations cited also. Then we have to say that it is used there as a figure of speech. Anyhow there is the difference in usage. We find our author using the word in its direct sense, contrary to the usage of the earlier authors.

The next one is in sūṛṇai No. 50. “பண்ணார் பாடல் பண்புரை இசைகொள் வேதம் போலே” comes there. This means that Tiruvāymoḷi which is referred to ‘Paṇṇār pāṭal’ is like the sāma veda which is mentioned here as ‘பண்புரை இசை கொள் வேதம்’. ‘Paṇṇār pāṭal’ means the verses which can be set to music i.e., Tiruvāymoḷi. The commentator gives the meaning the sāma veda to the phrase Paṇṇurai icaikoḷ vētam which is endowed with paṇ and music.

‘Paṇṇār pāṭal’ occurs in Tiruvāymoḷi.⁴ But the phrase ‘Paṇṇurai Vēta’ is found nowhere in Aruḷicceyal. A phrase which is similar to that does appear in Tiruvāymoḷi. It reads like this ‘Paṇṇuṭai Vēta.’ ‘Paṇṇurai Vēta’ means the same thing. i.e. The Vēta which is the mainstay of music. The famous commentator, Maṇavāḷa Māmuni, points out that this is a new phrase introduced by the author of Ācārya Hṛdayam.

The second half of the above line is ‘icaikoḷ vēta’ an expression taken from *Periya Tirumoḷi*.⁵ This refers to sāma veda. Why this particular expression has been used by the author to refer to Sāma Veda is also noteworthy. The author wants to emphasise that Sāma Veda is the most musical of compositions and so he has purposely used the term ‘Paṇṇurai icaikoḷ veta’ to denote Sāma Veda. It is his own expression.

3. Sūṛṇai 75 runs as follows: “வீட்டின்ப இன்பப் பாக்களில் த்ரவ்ய பாஷா நிருபண சமம் இன்ப மாரியில் ஆராய்ச்சி”

Here the term ‘Inpamāri’ which means the cloud which pours delight or bliss on all refers to Āḷvār. He is spoken of like this, because he has showered like a cloud delight on the devotees of God through the gift of Tiruvāymoḷi.

4. Tiru. 10. 7. 5

5. Periya Tiru. 5-3-2

This particular term is taken from Tiruvāymoḷi itself. There it appears as 'Aṭiyārkkū inpaṁāriye.'⁶ The famous commentator of Iṭu explains this expression as follows. He says that it refers to Tiruvāymoḷi. Āḷvār says that he is fortunate in having been gifted by God to compose a treatise of verses in His praise in rich and refined Tamil. Further that treatise gives delight to the servants of God. So it is called a delightful cloud (the cloud showering delight). Because he feels delight in these verses, he hopes that they should give the same delight to others also.

Thus we find the expression taken from Tiruvāymoḷi is used in Ācārya Hṛdayam with a different meaning in a different context. When we consider the earlier verses in the same series⁷ in Tiruvāymoḷi, the new meaning or interpretation given by the author of Ācār a Hṛdayam seems only to enrich the passage in Tiruvāymoḷi. In all the other verses we find Āḷvār expressing his pride on what he has accomplished. So here, in this verse also one can conveniently say that Āḷvār feels happy over what he has done and proclaims proudly that he has become a delightful cloud to the devotees of God by giving them the treatise of Tiruvāymoḷi.

4. In sūṛṇai 99 the Sāḍhanabhakti *i.e.*, the bhakti which forms a means to attain God is elaborately explained. There the following phrase is found 'Viḷakkinaikkaṇṭu' meaning literally 'on seeing the light.'

The commentator takes the word 'Viḷakku' as referring to Soul. This particular term has been taken from a verse⁸ by Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār. There we have the phrase 'Viḷakkinai vitiyil Kāṇṭpār.' There the word Viḷakku denotes not the soul but the paramātman or God who is often figuratively spoken of as viḷakku or light. So here also we find the author introducing a new meaning to a word he has taken from an earlier work. Here our author differs from the famous commentator, Periya vācān Piḷḷai.

That the word 'Viḷakku' is used by Aḷakiyamaṇavāḷanāyanār to denote only the soul is proved beyond doubt by the commentator, on two grounds.

1. In the very same sūṛṇai wherein that word occurs seeing or understanding of God is referred to by the expressions such as ' அரும் பெரும் சுடரைக் கண்டு ' etc., So this word cannot but mean soul in the earlier context.
2. Further in sūṛṇai 23 also where we find the phrase ' விதியில் காண்பார் ' which has been taken from the very same verse of Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār is used to denote the soul or Jīva. Because the stages referred to in this sūṛṇai belong only to Jīvas. So it is obvious that when our author uses the word Viḷakku here he means only the soul. (It is to be remembered here that in Sūṛṇai one ' Tuḷakkamlī viḷakku ' the steadily burning light was used to denote ' A ' the first letter of alphabet).
5. Sūṛṇai 184 speaks about the ' Praṇatha Pāratantṛya ' quality of God at the fertile Vāṭṭāru.

This aspect of God is depicted in Tiruvāymoli⁹. The expression ' விண்ணுலகம் தருவானாய் விரைகின்றான் அது நமது விதிவகையே ' which finds a place in the first verse of that series of ten, precisely and ably describes this quality of God. The commentator of Īṭu interpret it in two ways. The earlier Ācāryas held that God blesses people according to their virtues. But Rāmānuja when he heard this, felt that this did not suit the context and so he gave the following interpretation. He said that God becomes a dependent and obeys the commands of Āḷvār.

The latter meaning given by Rāmānuja is accepted as the best by the author of Īṭu and Aḷakiyamaṇavāḷar also follows that when he uses the term ' Praṇatha Pāratantṛya. ' This is opposed to the earlier meanings but it is in accordance with Sri Rāmānuja's interpretation which is certainly an improvement on the others if we consider Āḷvār as super mystic.

6. Sūṛṇai 205 speaks about the result or effect of Āḷvār's teachings. Āḷvār started his preaching as a service without expecting any fame, profit or admiration from others. He selected pure

9. Tiru. 10-6

and sacred words which are like fragrant flowers and composed hymns on God and became his servant. By reciting his devotional hymns all the people became devoted to God and attained good life. So Āḷvār who was anxiously hoping for the welfare of the people became free from that anxiety. He was feeling lonely in this world because of non-availability of bhaktās. Many have become Godly minded now and so he was relieved of that agony. He was feeling unhappy owing to non-availability of suitable persons who serve God. Now Āḷvār was relieved of that burden also. Thus it is explained that Āḷvār's preachings were fully crowned with success.

In the sūṛṇai which explains this aspect we find an expression 'Malar nāṭi.' It has been taken from Tiruvāymoḷi.¹⁰ The meaning given above suits that context. But in the above sūṛṇai for the expression 'Malar nāṭi āṭceyya' the commentator gives a different meaning. He states that Malar or flowers here refers to the various souls. Āḷvār searched and found out various Jīvās and preached to them as a selfless service. And he became successful in his attempt. This is the meaning given by Maṇavāḷa Māmuni, perhaps one that was accepted by all in his days. If we take it like that then this becomes another example of Aḷakiyamaṇavāḷar, the author of Ācārya Hṛdayam using words taken from ancient works in a slightly different sense.

10. Tiru. 5-5-10

CHAPTER II

THE VAIṢṆAVA MAṆIPRAVĀLA STYLE AND ĀCĀRYA HṚDAYAM.

'Style is the man' is the proverb. So to know about an author one has to study or examine his style. In the case of an ancient author, his style will show not only his individualistic characteristics but it will also reflect his age to a certain extent. So the style should be studied with reference to the author's time of living. Here, an attempt is made to analyse the style of the Vaiṣṇava works in general and with special reference to the style of the author of Ācārya Hṛdayam.

In the inscriptions of the third century B.C. we find a language in which Tamil words and Sanskrit words are freely mixed together. But no book is available which has been written in the so called Maṇipravāla style, earlier than ninth century. It is said the Jains and Buddhists who tried to propagate their faiths in the Tamil land wrote their books in the native language of the people. Then they might have written in a style which was an admixture of Sanskrit or Prakrit words and Tamil words. The grammar book Vīracōḷiyam which was written in the eleventh century A.D., speaks about Maṇipravāla style but in poetry. This may be taken as a sign that before that time there was Maṇipravāla style in vogue to a considerable amount, so as to be recognised in a grammar book.

He defines Maṇipravāla style as one in which both Tamil and Sanskrit words are freely mixed and written like a garland or chain made up of both precious stones of gold and coral. They thought it was very beautiful to look at and sweet to hear. In the Malayalam language also we find Maṇipravāla style. There the definition given differs from what is said in Tamil. If red gems and red coral stones are combined and a chain is made both the varieties of stones will look alike and it will not be easily possible for one to sort them out separately. Just like that both the Malayalam words and Sanskrit words join together and form a beautiful

style. That style was called Maṇipravāḷa style in Malayalam language. It was mainly in poetry this style was used in Malayalam. Not only the words but also the Sanskrit grammatical constructions were adopted in Malayalam. A series of Sanskrit compounds predominate.

In the ancient language of Tamil, this is not the case. The Vaiṣṇava Āḷvārs lived between the fifth and the ninth centuries A.D. Their contributions to Tamil are all in verse. They are written in pure and elegant style which cannot be called a Maṇipravāḷa style in any sense of that term. It is true that they are not like the poems of the earlier period. We find that the number of Sanskrit words used there are more and also the style is not so stiff as in the early days. That was the trend of the times. Even while using Sanskrit words these authors seem to be very particular in maintaining the sweet pronunciation peculiar to Tamil language. They were using the Sanskrit as would be pronounced by an ordinary Tamilian. Nammāḷvār uses the word 'Vaiṣṇavar' to denote 'Vaiṣṇavar,' 'iṭṭam' (wish) for 'iṣṭam.' It is noteworthy that even for denoting the Lord - the Supreme Being - he uses perhaps the colloquial word 'Viṭṭu' and not the correct Sanskrit form 'Viṣṇu.' From this it is obvious that the Āḷvārs were very careful in not adopting foreign words as they stood.

In the tenth century Sri Nāthamuni came. Beginning from him there is a line of Vaiṣṇavite Ācāryas. The important persons among them are Sri Nāthamuni, Sri Āḷavandār, Sri Rāmānuja, Sri Piḷḷai Lōkācārya and Sri Maṇavāḷa Māmuni. Apart from these great men, Sri Kūrat Āḷvān, Sri Vēdānta Dēsika and the five authors who have written commentaries on Tiruvāymoḷi, the great treatise of Nammāḷvār the saint and first Ācārya, may also be mentioned here. Sri Rāmānuja who expounded the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy lived in the eleventh century. In the Vaiṣṇava Ācārya line, persons who were before Sri Rāmānuja including himself have written all their books in the Sanskrit language only. They held the verses of Āḷvārs as Pramāṇas like the Vedas and Upanisads. Sri Āḷavandār in a ślōka says that the Vedic rules (commands) do not go contrary to the noble thoughts of Āḷvārs who were ardent devotees of Mahāviṣṇu.¹ It is said even Sri

Rāmānuja wrote his commentary on Vēdānta Sūtra in the light of Nammālvār's Tiruvāymoḷi.² One may raise a question if it was so why those Ācāryars wrote their works in Sanskrit instead of in Tamil. The reason is threefold.

1. The commentaries for Sanskrit works had to be written in that language.
2. Sanskrit was a language spoken by learned people throughout India. For reaching a wider public they might have selected the Lingua franca of India of those times (Sanskrit).
3. These principles coming with a new force in Sanskrit were already available for the Tamils in Tamil in the songs of Ālvārs and if elucidations and systematisations were necessary, they could till wait the establishment and popularisation if these principles had been effected through the well-established learned practice of explaining these through commentaries on the threefold books viz., Upaniṣads, Brahma Sūtra and Bhagavad Gītā.

In the Tamil country these Ācāryars used to deliver lectures in Tamil to explain the hidden truths enshrined in the verses of Ālvārs. These speeches might have been in a language which contained both Sanskrit and Tamil words. These lectures which explained Godly experiences of Ālvārs and the literary beauties of their verses were passed on from generation to generation orally. It was difficult to write a commentary on this poetical experience. The commentary should not make the readers neglect the original. During the time of Rāmānuja his disciples got his consent with great effort and persuasion to write a commentary on Tiruvāymoḷi or rather to record those speeches in a book or written form. With great hesitation Sri Rāmānuja acceded to their request. Tirukkurukaippirān Piḷḷān who was one of Rāmānuja's devout followers wrote the first commentary on Tiruvāymoḷi. It is called 'Āṟāyirappaṭi' containing as it does 6,000 paṭis or *granthas*, each *grantha* containing 32 syllables. Later on, four more persons wrote elaborate commentaries on the same work. All these works are written in the Manipravāḷa style. Apart from these, a few prose works on philosophy were also written in this style.

Ācārya Hṛdayam is a treatise wherein a short and clear exposition of the mind of Nammālvār, who can be said to be the first Ācārya, is explained. This work contains all the important things found in the commentary called 'īṭu' and it is something more than that. We know the author of Ācārya Hṛdayam, Aḷakīamaṇavāḷa Nāyanār, was the youngest son of the author of 'īṭu.' This work which contains 234 sūṇais, could not have been written for the general reader. Even a casual glance will convince anyone of this truth. One who has a thorough knowledge of the four thousand verses of Ālvārs and also firm faith and deep knowledge of Vedas upanisads, purāṇās and itihāsas can understand this work. One may ask what is the need or necessity to write a new book for those who have studied so many śāstras? The answer for that question is this (1) This contains the gist of all those śāstras and that too is given here precisely and with clarity. (2) Though Nammālvār's work is in Tamil the ideas expressed here are identical with the ideas found in Vedas. To make known these two points clear a book of this type was required. Further more, the verses of Nammālvār are superior to other works. They are very clear. They are useful to all, irrespective of caste or creed. These special features are brought home in this work. This idea is expressed in sūṇais 71 and 72.

1. 'அல்ப சுருதர் கலக்கின சுருதி நன்னூனத்துறை சேர்ந்து
ஆழ்பொருளை அறிவித்தது'
2. 'மேகம் பருகின சமுத்ராம்பு போலே நூற் கடல் சொல்
இவர் வாயனவாய்த் திருந்தின வாறே சர்வதா சர்வ
உப ஜீவ்யமாமே'

Meaning:

The half learned have made the Vedas seem to be confusing. But those vedas when they were delivered through Nammālvār, who is an abode of goodness and wisdom, they became clear and capable of showing all the meanings hidden in them. The saltish sea water, when transformed into clouds and then poured down it loses its saltishness and becomes useful for all and for all purposes. Just like that the vast ocean of Vedas when coming out as the words of Nammālvār, became useful to all and at all times. Thus the superiority and greatness of Nammālvār's Tiruvāymoḷi is clearly

brought out. We find the style of the book is also suited to these aims. Sūrṇai (cūrṇikai) can be said to be more like a sūtram. Sūtram, according to Tamil tradition, is like a small mirror and in that it also in a condensed form of a few words is full of meaning and unshakable clarity and accuracy. It has no metrical restrictions as to foot line etc. These features can be seen specially in Sūrṇais 11, 74, 95 and 125. Words and phrases taken freely from the verses of Āḷvārs and also from Sanskrit works are used in plenty by this author. When compared with other works of the age which are in Maṇipravāḷa style the use of Sanskrit words in this work is not much; the percentage will certainly be low, because the author uses the Tamil words from the verses of Āḷvārs to explain Nammāḷvār's mind or idea through his own words. Let us consider how the Sanskrit and Tamil words are combined in usage in this work.

1. To express one and the same idea the author uses Sanskrit and Tamil words alternately. Thereby he reveals that there is no difference in the basic tradition or revelation contained in the two languages.

The first sūrṇai begins as 'Kāruṇikanāna Śarvēśvaran' meaning the all merciful God. The same ends as 'Nirmaiyināl Aruḷ Ceytān' meaning He did it according to His intrinsic nature which is mercy. The word 'Kāruṇikan' is taken from the Sanskrit verse of Bhakṣar. The later word 'Nirmaiyināl' is taken from the Tamil verse of Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār. 'Nirmai' means true nature and that refers to Mercy only. In this way it is shown the two different words from the two different languages have more or less the same meaning. The second sūrṇai ends as 'Viṭu paṇṇu.' This means giving up what should be given up (abandoned) and to practice what should be followed. These words are taken from Tiruvāymoḷi.³ It is said that it is the effect of knowledge or discernment. To denote the same idea expressed above we find the author using two different Sanskrit words in the beginning of the 3rd sūrṇai. They are त्याग्य and उपदेय respectively. त्याग्य means that which is to be given up. उपदेय means that which is to be adhered to. These are sorrow and happiness. Sūrṇai 4 mentions the farthest limitations of these

3. Tiru. 1-2-1 and 1-2-5

qualities or things. Those are mentioned by the sweet Tamil phrases coined by Ālvār as பன்மாமாயத்து அழுந்துகை and பேரின்பத்து இன்புறுகை. In the next sūṇṇai we find the two aspects are referred to with Sanskrit words such as 'அனந்தக்லேசம்' and 'நிரதிசய ஆனந்தம்'. This method is followed in many other places. Sūṇṇai 6 ends with 'இருவல் வினை' 'அருந்நல் வினை'. The next sūṇṇai gives reason for that. There these two aspects are referred to in Sanskrit words 'கர்மம்' and 'கிருபா(பீஜம்)'. These words give the substance of what was expressed somewhat clearly and effectively in Tamil words earlier. In sūṇṇai 11 we find the following 'அந்தமும் வாழ்வுமாகிற ஹாநிசத்தைகளை'. Here 'அந்தம்' and 'வாழ்வு' are Tamil words or Tamilised words and they are explained by the two Sanskrit words following viz., 'ஹாநி' and 'சத்தை'. In the latter portion of the book in Sūṇṇai 98 we find the author writing as if explaining the words of one language with the words of another language. The sūṇṇai runs as follows: "இருள் துயக்கு மயக்கு மறப்பு என்கிற அநுதய ஸம்சய விபர்யய விஸ்மிருதிகள் அற்று மலர்மிசை எழுகிற ஞானத்தை காதல் அன்பு வேட்கை அவா என்னும் சங்க காம அநுராக ஸ்நேகம் ஆதி அவஸ்தா நாமங்களோடே பரம பக்தி தசை ஆக்குகை". Here the Tamil words இருள்-துயக்கு-மயக்கு-மறப்பு are mentioned along with their respective Sanskrit equivalents அநுதய-ஸம்சய-விபர்யய-விஸ்மிருதி and also காதல்-அன்பு-வேட்கை-அவா are mentioned with their respective Sanskrit equivalents, சங்க காம அநுராக and ஸ்நேகம். From this one can infer that the author's intention in writing like this might be to show that the ideas expressed in Tamil and Sanskrit are the same. In other words same ideas can be expressed either in one language or the other.

The author lived in an age when the Sanskrit language was respected as superior to any other language by a section of the people. What was written in Sanskrit was alone considered to be respectable and honourable, even as the only revelation. The author of this work and his followers did not agree with that idea. According to him this view is not correct. Even in Tamil there are similar worthy ideas. Is there any thing wrong in accepting these ideas even when expressed in Tamil or Sanskrit? This author tries to bring home to both the scholars of Tamil language and those of the Sanskrit language that it is not the language that is

to be considered but only the ideas expressed in them are important. This aspect is emphatically expressed in sūrnais 76 and 90.

2. Next we shall see how the words of Sanskrit and Tamil languages are being combined by the author. They can be divided conveniently into two kinds. The first kind is joining them together in such a way that it is easier for readers to distinguish which words are taken from which language. Example:

“ஆதித்ய ராமதிவாகர அச்யுதபாநுக்களுக்குப் போகாத
உள்ளிருள் நீங்கி சோஷியாத பிறவிக் கடல்வற்றி விகனியாத
போதில் கமலமலர்ந்தது வகுள பூஷண பாஸ்கரோக்யத்திலே”⁴

Meaning:

The sun drives the darkness from the world. Rama is compared to a sun. He, with the aid of his arrows which are his rays, made dry the ocean of his enemies. Krishnan is also said to be a sun ‘Acyutabhānu.’ He took birth in the womb of Devaki in order that all the lotuses of various worlds may blossom. It is not possible for the sun to drive away the darkness in the minds of people. For Rama it was not possible to make the ocean of birth’s circle dry up. Even for Krishna it was not possible to make the hearts of all his followers blossom. But, by the birth of Nammālvār the shining sun, who adorned himself with the garland of Vakuḷa flowers, all the three things were accomplished easily. To give expression to these ideas the author uses the following Sanskrit words ‘ஆதித்ய, ராமதிவாகர, அச்யுதபாநு, சோஷியாத, விகனியாத, வகுள பூஷணம் and பாஸ்கரோக்யம்’. One may wonder why in a book written in Tamil the author uses so many Sanskrit words for which apt Tamil words are easily available. ‘ஆதித்ய’ is taken from a Sanskrit śloka; ‘ராமதிவாகர’ and ‘சோஷம்’ are taken from a śloka in Sundarakāṇḍam of Ramayana;⁵ ‘அச்யுதபாநு’ and ‘வகுள பூஷண பாஸ்கரோக்யம்’ are taken respectively from Viṣṇupurāṇa⁶ and a Sanskrit work ‘Parāṅkusa Aṣṭakam’⁷ written on Nammālvār.

4. AH-S 83

5. Rama. S. Sundar. 37-16

6. Viṣṇupurāṇa 5-3-2

7. Purān. A.

Likewise the words 'பிறவி-கடல்'⁸ and 'போதில் கமல வன்னெஞ்சம்'⁹ are taken from the Tamil work Periyālvār Tirumōḷi. (Here also we find the words 'சோஷியாத-வற்றி' and 'விகளியாத-மலர்ந்தது'. This is another example to show how the words of the two languages are used by the author to be of help to one another). By adopting such a peculiar style the author successfully brings home to the readers the association of ideas so many of these words denote in their original usage. For one who has studied the works from which the words are taken, this simple sūṛṇai given here becomes one with full of deeper meaning. This power of allusion is the secret of some modern poesy. The words do not suggest merely the ordinary meaning but the meaning as occurring in the verses alluded, in all their richness of meaning and suggestion in the original context, made richer by the new context. In addition the economy of words resulting from this kind of allusion is tremendous. One of the intentions of the author was to show to the Sanskrit scholars of the day - many of whose mother tongue was Tamil, that the great saint of Tamil Nāṭu - Nammālvār and his works are second to none. To show this, his way of writing helps him to a great extent.

3. The second type is to use the words of the two languages so closely that it is not possible for an ordinary reader to find out which are Sanskrit and which are Tamil. At times even words of mono syllables are severed from their context and used with words of other language. A typical example for that is given here. Example:¹⁰

“இரானெனில் நசவாகக் குழைத்தவன் பின்தொடர இருந்தவன் சிறையிலும் விதிதன் புணைவன் என்று ஜீவிதாதி களால் குறைவின்றி மாயும் வகை விஷசஸ்த்ரங்கள் தேடி வில்வவலாஹா என்று இரக்கமெழாக் கொடுமைகள் சங்கித்து என்னையும் ஜீவந்திமென்று ஆள் விட்டுச் சுடரை அடைந்து அகலகில்லா முற்றுவமை பெரு மகளோடே”

The meaning of the sūṛṇai: Metaphorically Nammālvār is said to be Sita, the wife of Rama, or the consort of Lord Viṣṇu on the

8. Periyālvār. Tiru. 5-4-2

9. Ibid. 5-2-8

10. AH. S. 125

basis of the following eleven similarities they possess in their qualities and actions. The main aspect is their inseparability from the Lord. A poet in using metaphor reveals his integral or universal vision where he sees similarities amongst things which appear to the ordinary vision as unconnected or even contradictory. Our author with such a vision reveals similarities between different kinds of souls or characters coming in philosophy and itihāsas. To reveal this fundamental similarity, he uses the words of Nammālvār and also the words found in itikāsas coming to describe the characters compared.

1. Sita so to say ceases to exist when separated from Rama.
So does Ālvār. (Rama. Ayo. 53-31)
(Tiru. 1-7-6)
2. Rama intimately moved with Sita and blessed her. Ālvār also speaks about the Lord coming into himself and identifying with him. (Tiru. 2-7-9 and 2-6-10)
3. Sita was imprisoned in Lanka so that Rama came in search of her and Ālvār also speaks of his imprisonment. (Tiru 1-4-1)
4. Sita advised Rāvaṇa to be friendly with Rama. Ālvār also advised people turned away from the Lord, to love and rely on the Supreme Being if they wanted to cross the ocean of births and deaths. (Rama. Su. 21-20)
(Tiru. 2-8-1)
5. Both of them Sita and Nammālvār speak with contempt about their life in this world when separated from their Lord. (Rama. Su. 26-25)
(Tiru. 4-8-1)
6. Both of them tried to put an end to their lives when they did not get His blessing or when they were not favoured with the presence of their Lord. (Rama. Su. 28-16)
(Tiru. 5-4-3)
7. They were aware of the heroism or Valour of their Lord and on occasions when they had to address Him, they lamented they could not but praise his heroic deeds. (Tiru. 10-5)

8. When they suffered the pangs of separation they doubted the mercy of their Lord.

(*Rama. Su. 26-13*)

(*Tiru. 2-4-3*)

(*Tiru. V. 36*)

9. They sent messengers reminding their Lord that they preserve their lives only in the hope that they would certainly get His grace or Mercy.

(*Rama. Su. 39-10*)

(*Tiru. 6-1-10*)

10. Sita Devi speaks about the relationship between herself and the Lord as that between sun and its rays. Āļvār also speaks of his joining the Lord who is a magnet Light that could not allow Āļvār to go away from Him.

(*Rama. Su. 21-15*)

(*Tiru. 2-3-6*)

11. Both of them speak of their impossibility of remaining separate from Him.

(*Tiru. 6-10-9*)

Thus it is evident that Āļvār has complete similarity with Sita Pirāṭṭi who is the queen of Rama, the avatār of the Supreme Being.

The sūṛṇai quoted above contains 43 words in all. Among them the following seven words or phrases have been taken either from Rāmāyaṇa or from some other Sanskrit works. ‘நச, விதி, ஜீவிதாதி, விஷம், சஸ்த்ரம், ஹரா, ஜீவந்தி.....’ These words are used to describe the qualities of Sita Devi. The two words ‘சிறையில்’ and ‘கொடுமைகள்’ which refer to Sita and also ‘இராணெனில், குழைத்தவன், வன்சிறையில், புணைவன், குறைவின்றி, மாயும் வகை, வில்வலவா, இரக்கமெழா, என்னையும், சுடரை அடைந்து, அகலகில்லா, பெருமகள்’’ which refer to Āļvār have been taken from Tiruvāymōḷi. The words left out from the above lists are only eleven in number. They are ஆக, பின், என்று, என்று, தொடர், இருந்த, தேடி, ஆள் விட்டு, முற்றுவமை. The first four are conjunctions or connectors and the rest have come to make the sentence a meaningful one. Here we find the Sanskrit words and Tamil words are mingled very closely. The sentence is

an amalgam of key words of Sanskrit itikāsa and the Tamil Tiruvāymoli which is beyond words but yet distilled so to say into the Tamil cūrṇika. In some other places we find as is by magic words and phrases coming from various Prabandhas in Sanskrit and Tamil, written before his time, are forming into sentences even without requiring a single word from the pen of our author.

To describe the qualities of 'Pirāṭṭi' and Āḷvār separate attributes are used in some places and in some other places one and the same attribute is used to denote the qualities of both of them. This is a practice well established in Tamil poetry and Tamil rhetorical studies, where the words attributed to the things compared and words attributed to the things compared to, are mutually interchangeable to both in addition to their qualifying the thing which they are first intended to qualify. Thus brevity is achieved. This is one of the fine examples that shows the peculiarity of the style of the author and also how he has used his knowledge of various śāstras in writing this book. We find here the Sanskrit words and Tamil words going hand in hand. One cannot but wonder how the author who began to express the similarity between Sita Devi and Āḷvār, indirectly reveals the similarity with the ideas in the two different languages Tamil and Sanskrit. This amalgam of two languages really deepens the meaning of both the literatures by one enriching the other and creating a new vision.

4. In the later portion of the work where the author explains directly the ideas found in the 'verses of Nammāḷvār,' we find he is quoting verses of Nammāḷvār profusely. Occasionally only here and there a few words from Sanskrit are used. The following is an example wherein we find only Tamil words.¹¹

“ தாய்க்கும் மகனுக்கும் தம்பிக்கும் இவர்க்கும் இவரடி
பணிந்தவர்க்குமே இவையுள்ளது ”.

Meaning:

In the preceding sūṇai it was explained that on account of the knowledge of the relationship between the living beings and the

Supreme Being and of the knowledge of the nature of unbearable sufferings of people and limitless grace or love towards all, Nammālvār often instructs or advises or perhaps begs the people to do what is good for them. In this sūṇai it is stated that apart from him, there are a few others also who had such qualities of mercy, a feeling for others and advising them similarly. They are Sita the mother, Prahlāda the son, Vibhīṣṇa the younger brother and Sri Rāmānuja who worshipped and attained the feet of Nammālvār. Sita Devi is referred to as the mother of the world in Viṣṇupurāṇa.¹² Prahlāda is mentioned as son 'மீள அவன் மகன்' in Periyālvār Tirumoli.¹³ Vibhīṣṇa is spoken of as the younger brother in Tiruvāymoḷi.¹⁴ Rāmānuja is referred to as one who worshipped at the feet of Māraṇ 'மாறன் அடிபணிந்துய்ந்தவன்' in Ramanuja Nūṇṇandāti.¹⁵ In mentioning a few others who possessed that rare quality, we see the author selecting words like mother, son, brother and disciple and constructing a sentence which is really brings together the pictures of those literary works into a new and vivid picture of greater significance.

5. One may ask whether to any reader who is well versed in only one language, say Tamil or Sanskrit, the style of the author will be of any use. It has to be accepted that to them it may not be of much use. But there is this to be said in favour of this commingling. The readers have to be those who know Tamil. The poems of Ālvārs are intended for the common man. Even those who are not very learned, can read them so to say as they run. This is one great truth which our author wants to drive home even though he is not saying it in so many words. There is no meaning in converting those who are already converted. This book of course gives a deeper meaning to their faith if those people knew Sanskrit. Those who were great scholars in Sanskrit and who ordinarily accept this view, stood to benefit by this book. They knew sufficient Tamil, enough for understanding the Tamil portions and quotations. It was the Sanskrit portions which would come as familiar allusions. They would therefore understand these allusions better in the light of Ālvār's songs. They also would

12. Viṣṇupurāṇa. 1-9-36

13. Periyālvār Tirumoli 1-6-2

14. Tiru. 7-6-6

15. Rāmānu. Nūṇ. 1

realise that the fundamental truths are the same in Āḷvār's songs and the Vedas. They would also learn here how to interpret Āḷvār's songs in their own familiar phraseology.

Anyhow the knowledge of more than one language makes one to understand his original language thoroughly and clearly. That can be explained by various examples from this work.

Example:

“அத்யயநஞான அநுஸ்டானங்களாலே
பிராஹ்மன்யமாகிருப்போலே
சந்தங்களாயிரமு மறியக் கற்று வல்லாரானால்
வைஷ்ணவத்வஸித்தி”¹⁶

Meaning:

Here the author explains how the Brahmin Status and the Vaiṣṇavite Status are attained. By reciting vedas under an Ācārya, understanding them and practising those tenets in every day life, one attains the status of a brahmin. Likewise by reciting the thousand verses of Nammāḷvār which can be set to music, understanding their meaning and becoming efficient in them, that is to say practising them in life, brings the status of a vaiṣṇavite to one. Here the phrase ‘அறியக் கற்று வல்லாரானால்’ is explained as above, only because of its association with the well known phrase ‘அத்யயநஞான அநுஸ்டானங்களால்’. In some other places also we find the Tamil words and phrases are emphasised as having greater clarity and intensity of meaning. Sūṇai 20 may be cited as an example. In the same way it is said the ideas expressed in Sanskrit by great sages, become clear when they are studied in the light of the verses of Nammāḷvār. The great scholar equally in both the languages Tamil and Sanskrit, Sri Vēdānta Dēśika has expressed this very same idea in very clear terms. That may be quoted here

“மங்கையர் கோன் என்றிவர்கள் மகிழ்ந்து
பாடும் செய்யதமிழ் மாலைகள்
தெளிய வோதித் தெளியாத மறைநிலங்கள்
தெளிகின்றோமே”¹⁷.

16. AH. S. 37

17. Rahas.

‘ Having carefully studied the beautiful hymns sung with delight in Tamil by Āḷvārs, we have come to understand the real meaning of the regions of the Upaniṣads which are otherwise difficult to comprehend.’¹⁸

6. Generally speaking brevity of expression, wonderful combination of words and the enchanting grace that goes with it are the few noteworthy characteristics one finds in our author’s style. Any number of examples can be cited to prove this.

Brevity of Expression :

‘ பெரும் புறக்கடலும் சுருதி சாகரமும் அலைத்து
ஆழ்ந்து ஒடுமிடங்களில்
அயோக்யர்க்குச் சமைத்த மடுவும் சாய்கரகமும்
மாநமேய சரமம் ’¹⁹

‘ Māna Saramam ’ means the extreme point or the highest point of the Pramāṇa or the authority. ‘ Mēya Saramam ’ means the highest or the farthest end of the Pramēya or the truth established by such authority or the goal to be attained. The compound ‘ பெரும்புறக்கடல் ’²⁰ which means ‘ the big sea which is away from this earth ’ was used by Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār to denote the Supreme deity. ‘ சுருதி சாகரம் ’²¹ which means the ocean of Vedas is taken from a Sanskrit work ‘ Vāyuprōkta Saivām.’²¹ The ocean is said to be a place which cannot be measured easily. In it there would be places where the waves will be rough and where the depth will be too much. And also in some places the sea may take the form of a small stream in which the water will be running swiftly. One cannot take a bath in the ocean in such places mentioned above. In some places the sea will be calm. That will be the suitable place to one who wants to bathe. Just like that God who is said to be like a big sea which encircles this earth has a few forms. They are called Vyūha, Antaryāmin, Avatāra and Arcā forms. Vyūha is compared to the sea with roaring waves; Antaryāmi state is compared to the deep place and Avatāra state is compared

18. Rahas – English – P. 1

19. A.H. S. 74

20. Periya Tiru. 7-10-1

21. Vāyu Prōkta Saivam

to the place where the water is in a moving condition. These three states of God are not much useful to devotees who want to enjoy or get benefit from Him, like the three states of the sea mentioned above. The fourth state of Arcā is compared to a pond where the water is in a calm position. Therefore the state of Arcā is most useful to devotees for their enjoyment. Thus the nature of God - the goal to be attained - is explained with a simile.

With regard to the Pramāṇa also (the book of authority) which describes God, there are five kinds. The Vedas are said to be like an ocean. They speak about the para aspect of God; pāṇca rātra Sāstra speaks about the Vyūha aspect; and the Manu Dharma Sāstra etc., speak about the Antaryāmi aspect of God and in the itihāsas the aspect of the avatāras is spoken of. Just like these forms, the sāstras which are mainly concerned with them are also not easily accessible to devotees. The sāstra which speaks predominantly about the Arcā form of God is easier to understand and recite and enjoy. It is the work of Āḷvār named as 'Tiruvāymoli' which is said to be another form of the Veda. It is compared to a 'சரகம்' small water container from which a thirsty person can drink water bringing it near to his mouth. Thus the simplicity of this kind of Pramāṇa is explained

In this way we find the superiority of the Arcā form of God and the great qualities like simplicity and sweetness of the divine verses of Āḷvār are brought home by introducing suitable comparisons clear enough to the kind of readers intended.

Mastery over combination of words:

To explain the superior nature of the gracious divine look of the Lord the following sūṛṇai²² is given;

“ ச்ரமணீ விதுர நுஷி பத்தினிகளைப்

புதராக்கின புண்டரீகாக்ஷன்

நெடுநோக்கு சாப மிழிந் தென்னப் பண்ணுமிநே ”

1. ‘ச்ரமணீ’ is the word for a woman ascetic. It denotes a woman ascetic Sapari by name in Rāmāyaṇa. As told by Kapanta, Rama himself went to see that old woman. She rejoiced at Rama's

coming. She admitted that because of His gracious look she became pure, devoid of all her sins-(Pūtāsmi) 'பூதாஸ்மி' (2) Vītura is a character in Mahābārata. Though endowed with knowledge and learning he was not of a high birth. When Krishna came as a messenger on behalf of the Pāṇḍavas to the king Duriyōdana, he choose to go to the house of Vītura and dine with him in preference to dining with the king and the learned Lords of the court. The king Duriyōdana was angry at this and began to scold Vītura. He addressed Krishna as 'Puṇḍarikāṭcha - Lotus eyed fellow! and asked "Why have you gone to a low born and dined with him discarding Bīṣma, Durōṇa and myself." Krishna's look was so beautiful so as to be admired as the lotus eyed, even by one who was angry with him. By such a gracious look of the Lord, Vītura became removed of all his sins. It is mentioned in Bhāgavata that the wives of Rishis gave food to cowherds at the wish of Krishna. One lady did it even discarding her husband and she attained Mōkṣa then and there. The poet Āṇṭāl while referring to this story in one of her verses in Tirumolī²³ describes Krishna's look as 'நெடுநோக்குக் கொள்ளும்'. The same author in another context while speaking about the gracious divine look of Krishna speaks of the burden of the sins being removed²⁴ 'எங்கள்மேல் சாபமிழிந்து'.

Our author when he speaks about the subject *i.e.*, the power of the God's graceful look - he explains it by citing these three incidents. He selects the main and important words from those verses which describe these incidents in Sanskrit and Tamil works and combine them together so as to make his point clear and clinching. This is the unique feature of this author. 'The phrase 'பூதராக்கின புண்டரீகாக்ஷன் நெடுநோக்கு' gives a new grandeur to the expression. It seems that the words are coming to him so as to find a glorified place in his writing.

Sweetness of chosen Words:

“ வீட்டின்ப இன்பப் பாக்களில் த்ரவிய பாஷா நிருபணசமம்
இன்பமாரியி லாராய்ச்சி ”²⁵

23. Nācci. Tiru. 12-6

24. Tiruppāvai 22

25. AH. S. 75

In the earlier sūṛṇais the Pramēya - the truths proved by the authorities viz., the object of attainment and the Pramāṇa the authoritative sources of knowledge, the books which describe God, were examined and the arcā form of God and the verses that are in Tamil sung by Āḷvār have been proved to be the best as Pramēya and Pramāṇa respectively. In this sūṛṇai we find besides those two ideas the birth of Āḷvār is explained. In the various forms of God the arcā form is described as 'வீட்டின்பம்' by Āḷvār (the very bliss of salvation). But there is a pun on 'வீடு' which means also a house; hence it means also the Household Bliss of the image of the Lord worshipped at home. It is therefore the easiest form which can be worshipped by devotees installing them in their houses in whatever form they like. In that form they can derive pleasure and joy. (கனிவார் வீட்டின்பமே)²⁶. To examine in what material the particular image of God is made up is said to be a sinful act. A devotee should not do that. Secondly the Tiruvāymoḷi which is written in Tamil verse had been described as 'இன்பப்பா' "the sweet verse" a phrase occurring in Perumāḷ Tiru-moḷi²⁷ of Kulasēkara Āḷvār. Tiruvāymoḷi contains such sweet verses and to denounce that work because it is written in Tamil is a forbidden act. Āḷvār is referred to as 'இன்பமாரி'²⁸ meaning the delightful cloud which showers these sweet verses. Therefore it is a sin and a crime for a devotee to examine the birth or caste of Āḷvār. In this sūṛṇai examining the birth of Āḷvār - that is the caste he belongs to, is condemned vehemently. Here we find the author using simply the words 'analysing Āḷvār.' He does not want even to mention that word. It is left as a suggestion to the reader. This can be taken as showing the contempt of the author for such an act. Three things are mentioned here. One is the homely delight 'வீட்டின்பம்' of arcā form; another is the delightful or pleasurable verse; 'இன்பப்பா'; The word 'inпам' in both these places suggest the divine nature of both and the third is a delightful cloud which showers sweet verses: the suggestion is this cloud showers divine bliss as though it were the author of this bliss-an idea which suggests the absurdity of talking about the caste of this divine source viz., Āḷvār. It is one of the examples of superb arts possible in the Maṇipravāḷa style. It may seem artificial to the present generation but it was the dialect of the Sri Vaiṣṇavas-

26. Tiru. 2-3-5

27. Perumāḷ Tiru. (1-4)

28. Tiru. 4-5-10

Simile is the main Alaṅkāra, the author uses often to embellish his style and also to make his ideas clearer. However, we find some other 'alaṅkāras' such as நிரல்நிறையணி and உருவகம் also used in some places. Example²⁹:

“இவை கிட்டமும் வேட்டுவேளானும் போலே ஒன்பொருள் பொருளல்லாதவை என்னுதே நானிலாத யானுமுளனாவன் என்கிற சாம்யம் பெறத்தின்று ஊதி அந்தமும் வாழ்வு மாகிற ஹாநி சத்தைகளை உண்டாக்கும்”

Here we find the simile and also the 'நிரல் நிறையணி' that is grouping the nouns together and the verbs together but in such an order that the nouns in turn may take their verbs arranged next in turn as predicate. 'Vēṭṭuvēḷān' - an insect and 'Kiṭṭam' the rust are two things compared to the relationship the soul or jīva has with (1) the Supreme Being and (2) with the non-sentient thing respectively. The words arranged respectively are here given as similes. The function of Kiṭṭam is referred to in the following words 'ஒன்பொருள் என்னுதே நானிலாத என்கிற சாம்யம் பெறத்தின்று அந்தமாகிற ஹாநியை உண்டாக்கும்' The function of Vēṭṭuvēḷān is referred to in the following words 'பொருளல்லாதவை என்னுதே யானுமுளனாவன் என்கிற சாம்யம் பெற ஊதி வாழ்வு ஆகிற சத்தையை உண்டாக்கும்" We find these words are joined alternately so that each noun takes its respective predicate thus explaining the function of Kiṭṭam' and the function of 'Vēṭṭuvēḷān. "போலே, என்னுதே, என்கிற, சாம்யம்பெற, ஆகிற, உண்டாக்கும்' are words which are common to both sets. In this way with the help of the bare minimum of words in a very condensed form the ideas are expressed. The sūṇai therefore appears pregnant with meaning.

In a few sūṇais while having occasion to speak about two aspects or things together, the words are arranged in a reverse way to form what is called the Chiasmus figure. It is called 'எதிர்நிரல் நிறையணி' in Tamil poetics. Example³⁰:

“கர்ம கைங்கர்யங்கள் ஸத்யாசத்ய நித்யாநித்யவர்ண தாஸ்ய அநுகுணங்கள்”

29. AH. S. 11

30. AH. S. 26

This should be taken in the following way 'கர்மம் அசத்ய அநித்ய வர்ண அநுகுணம் and கைங்கர்யம் சத்ய நித்ய தாஸ்ய அநுகுணம்'. Though the usual phrase is 'Karma-Kaiṅkarya' in explaining the two, the second Kaiṅkarya is taken for explanation and the first is next taken for explanation because out of the two, Kaiṅkaryam is more important than Karma. The author uses a host of similes which are very apt and which make the sūṛṇais very fascinating. We find this in sūṛṇais 19, 14, 71, 72, 131, 202, 188, 115, 84, 82, 75, 73, 74, 53, 44 and many others. One example is taken here and explained.

“ கனங்குழையிடக் காது பெருக்குதலும் மாஸஉபவாசி
போஜனப் புறப்பூச்சும் போலே ” 31

It was explained that the means for attaining the Lord was nothing but the unconditioned grace of God. If it is so why was Āḷvār not favoured with the request for salvation, he made in his very first verse in Tiruviruttam. Actually we find Āḷvār experiencing samślēṣa and Viślēṣa that is feeling united with Lord at times and feeling separated from Him on some other occasions. It is said this was done in order to increase the jñāna and Bhakti states of Āḷvār. If these things are not the causes for the attainment of God, a question arises what is the purpose of doing this thing. The answer is this. It is for making Āḷvār a fit person to hold such an exhilarating experience of God realisation, a joy which cannot be borne by ordinary individuals. One has to be trained to bear that infinite joy, even as one has to be trained to bear great illumination. To explain this idea, the above mentioned similes are quoted. It is the custom, a lady who wants to wear a heavy and large ear ornament gradually makes the ring hole in her ear bigger and bigger by inserting a yarn, a thread and afterwards a kutumpai. A person who has fasted a month, should not be given his usual food on the day of breaking it. He will not be in a position to digest it. So, first of all liquid food is applied on his body. Then he is given to drink some liquid and then some thick liquid till gradually the usual food is given to him. Massaging the body with food is in no way a cause or means for getting food. It only makes the man fit for receiving the regular food later on. By these two similes, it is proved clearly that the feelings of separa-

tion and union were in no way causes for his attainment of final God realisation.

One more aspect of his style that has to be mentioned here is his use of pun. The author plays on words while describing the special quality that predominates in the Arcā forms or images in temples which were sung by Nammālvār. In Tiruvāymoḷi we find 26 Tiruvāymoḷis *i.e.* about 260 verses are devoted to 26 various temples that exist even to day in the Tamil country. Among these 26, two sacred places that is the sacred mountain of Vēṅkaṭam in the North and the sacred mountain of Cōlaimalai in the South are spoken of by two Tiruvāymoḷis each. There are four other temples which are mentioned only in stray verses and not having a Tiruvāymoḷi each.

Our author finds out the important aspect of God expressed in each Tiruvāymoḷi and ascribes that aspect as the special feature of God in that temple, in a phraseology appropriate enough with the name of the places. Here comes in the play or pun on words.

‘த்யாஜ்ய தேக வ்யாமோகம் மருள்கள் கடியும் மயல் மிகு பொழிலிலே தழைக்கும்’³²

This sūṛṇai speaks about the mad love of God towards the unworthy body what Ālvār calls his own. This quality of Lord is elaborately expressed in Tiruvāymoḷi³³. It is sung on the Lord, who dwells on Tirumāḷirumcōlaimalai. There is another Tiruvāymoḷi³⁴ which was sung on the same place. In the above mentioned sūṛṇai to denote the hill the author uses the phrase ‘மருள்கள் கடியும் மயல் மிகு பொழில்’. In this ‘மருள்கள் கடியும்’ is taken from Tiruvāymoḷi (10-7) and ‘மயல் மிகு பொழில்’ is taken from Tiruvāymoḷi (2-10). The first one means that which is capable of driving the ignorance away. The second part means ‘the garden which is very fascinating.’ Tirumāḷirumcōlai hill contains such gardens. Because the word ‘பொழில்’ in Tamil means garden, the author gives a predicate for the Noun ‘Madlove’ which is suited for garden also. The word ‘தழைக்கும்’ in Tamil means ‘grows profusely.’ It also means ‘

32. AH. S. 185

33. Tiru. 10-7

34. Tiru. 2-10

'it is in abundance' in which case it will be very apt for the idea to be expressed. Thus we see the author using here many compounds which are apt. To cite a few more examples the following may be quoted from sūṛṇais 174, 184, 178 and 179. They are 'ஆற்றிலே கொழிக்கும், நதியிலே ஈரைபுரளும், காட்கரையிலே கரையழிக்கும், களத்திலே கூடு பூரிக்கும்''

Very long metaphors are also used in this book. I have explained the ideas in them elsewhere in this Thesis. So I give here only a few places wherein such metaphors appear. Sūṛṇais 104, 121, 125 and 127. Mentioning of Ācāryas as birds and cloud on the ground of similarities between them is explained under another topic. (vide chapter V).

CHAPTER III

AṬAKIYAMAṆAVĀḤAR ON TAMIL LANGUAGE AND TAMIL VEDAS

The work of the author and the commentaries on various verses of Āḷvārs are written in “Maṇipravāḷa” style. Those authors were scholars both in Tamil and Sanskrit. In modern times in our country (Tamil Nāṭu) we find the love for one’s language emphasised along with purity of language. There is a strong opinion prevalent in some quarters that mixing of foreign words into Tamil is not conducive to its growth and will lead to its decay and that persons who introduce the foreign words into Tamil have no love for their language. Discussion of this problem is beyond the scope of this thesis. So, leaving it aside, we may consider our author’s love towards his mother tongue and understand what were his ideas about the Tamil language.

Many of the Ācāryas who preceded our author had written original works and commentaries in Sanskrit. But we find Rāmānuja, the greatest among them had given a prominent place to Tamil language by prescribing the singing of the devotional Tamil songs of Āḷvārs as an indispensable part of daily religious ritual in the great temple of Srīraṅgam and other places. Tamil hymns were recited along with Sanskrit Vedas in Temples. It is not an exaggeration to say that these were given a more prominent place than the Vedas themselves. It was arranged to recite selected portions of Tiruvāymoḷi daily in temples and that tradition continues even to-day in Vaiṣṇava temples. These selected parts are called Temple Tiruvāymoḷis. ‘Temple’ refers to the important temple of Vaiṣṇavas, situated at Srīraṅgam. It is the only temple in whose praise all the Twelve Āḷvārs have sung hymns. Apart from this, once a year during the month of Mārkaḷi (December—January) a special function for 20 days was arranged there in honour of Tiruvāymoḷi and other sacred verses. This is called the Recitation festival. It continues even to-day and is celebrated in other temples as well. It is divided as ‘pakaḷ pattu’ and ‘Irāppattu’

meaning 'ten days,' and 'ten nights'. During the day time for first ten days certain portions from the verses of Ālvārs are sung and during the night time for the rest of the ten days Tiruvāymoḷi is mainly recited by specially appointed devotees who are named "Aṟaiyars." Even certain portions of the commentaries on these texts are recited. For the sake of spreading the songs of Ālvārs among the masses the important stanzas were interpreted by action and gesture as in Bharata Nāṭya or a drama. Persons acquainted with the traditional modes of depicting these songs through appropriate gestures are appointed for this purpose and they are respected and held in esteem for their services. This is a speciality we find in Vaiṣṇava temples alone and credit for this should go to Rāmānuja. To-day even after 800 years, we find such a procedure is in vogue in various Vaiṣṇava temples in our country. This apart, we may look to the references of the author of Ācārya Hṛdayam to Tamil in his work.

He refers to Tamil by the name 'Draviḍa' (S. 40). The word Draviḍa is a name denoting a family of languages in which Tamil is also one. This is the meaning given by Rev. Father Caldwell in his celebrated work 'Comparative Grammar of Dravidian Languages.' But in the 14th century, this word denoted Tamil only, as is evident from this book. Even the famous Saṅkara (or perhaps his successor) when mentioning about Tiruñāna Sambandha refers to the latter as the Draviḍa child. There also, the word denotes Tamil only. The two languages Sanskrit and Tamil, our author holds, are of two different kinds, but of the same status. He has no occasion to speak of the structural or grammatical differences between these languages. However he emphasises that both these languages are on a par and contain many similarities with regard to contents. Āgastyam is a name given to Tamil. This word means that which is made by Agastya, a revered saint of Tamil Nāṭu. If it is so, the author raises a question how a language which has a human saint for its origin can be compared with a language which is considered to be beginningless, namely the Sanskrit Language. The author's answer is that Tamil was called 'Āgastyam' not because it originated from the saint of that name but because it was given to the world (in a refined form) through that saint. Tamil was existent even before the time of Agastya. So it is also Anādi (beginningless) like Sanskrit. Just as eternal Vedic hymns came to light through

various old seers, Tamil also was given to the world through Agastya. Many poets refer to this in their works. The celebrated Tamil poet Kampan in his Rāmāyaṇa refers to Agastya as follows:

‘ என்று முளதென்தமிழ் இயம்பி இசை கொண்டான் ’

Tamil is eternal. By spreading it everywhere the saint Agastya attained fame. In this way while speaking about sage Agastya, Kampan spontaneously begins to praise Tamil by mentioning its eternal and everlasting quality. We find references to this effect, even in the verses of Āļvārs. Among the four references found there, one is given below.

‘ செந்திறத்த தமிழோசை வடசொல்லாகி ’ 1

Tirumaṅkaiāļvār while describing God mentions the various forms in which He appears. Among others the Lord appears to him in the form of refined sweet Tamil sounds and in the form of Sanskrit words. In this expression we find both the Tamil and Sanskrit languages are grouped together as the very form of God. That can be taken as showing their equality. And further in the order in which they are mentioned, Tamil is given the first place in an affectionate way using an epithet to denote its quality. It is taken as evidence to prove that Tamil was held superior to Sanskrit by the Āļvārs. The author concludes that the opinion held by the Āļvārs, holds good for us also.

The second point to which our author refers is that Tamil also contains Vedas. His line of argument is that when the Vedas were referred to by Āļvārs they use the expression வடமொழிமறை i.e., Vedas in Sanskrit. That itself is sufficient to prove that there are Vedas in Tamil also. If it is not so then there is no point in referring to the Vedas which are well known, as above. Vedas can be in any language. Nothing stands in the way. Just as Vedas in Sanskrit are classified into four categories on some basis, they can also be classified into Tamil Vedas and Sanskrit Vedas having the language as a criterion.^{1(a)}

1. Tiru. N. 4

1 (a). AH. S. 40

Thirdly, Vedas are said to be anādi. They have no human authorship. To accept the verses of Āḷvār as Vedas in Tamil, some strong objections are raised. Tamil verses are not anādi or beginningless and Āḷvār is the author of those verses. That is a disqualification for them for considering them as Vedas. This objection is answered as follows: Nānā the truths contained in the Veda-existed always. Before being revealed they were perhaps in the mind of God. The seers and poets understood them and expressed them to the world. So those truths were named after them. Vedas were delivered to Brahma and through him to seers. So also the eternal truths which existed even before Āḷvār, came through him to the world. Only for that reason Āḷvār is said to be the author of Tiruvāymoḷi. The law of gravitation was there even before Newton's discovery of it. No one can deny that. Because Newton discovered it and made it known to the world, we call it Newton's law. If we have this in our mind then the idea our author expresses with regard to Vedas and Tiruvāymoḷi can be understood clearly. Swami Vivēkānanda explains this idea in the same way in one of his lectures. This conception that our author enumerates here makes the truths common for all—*i.e.*, universal and that idea avoids conflicts between languages and helps foster a wider outlook.

There is another reference to Tamil wherein Agastya also is mentioned. 'தமிழ் மாமுனி திக்கு சரணயம்'². The southern region wherein the reputed Tamil saint lives is a refuge for all. The old seers praised the southern part of India on account of its being the abode of Agastya. Agastya is respected because of his connection with the Tamil language. Kulasēkara Āḷvār refers to him in his work as 'வண்தமிழ் மாமுனி'³ meaning the great saint of flourishing or fertile Tamil. This reference only is taken by our author and used in the above quoted sentence. This kind of veneration for Tamil language is expressed in many epics in Tamil, such as Cilappatikāram and Periapurāṇam. So we find our author following the same Tamil tradition. How can one doubt his love for his language and deep learning, leave alone his attempt to show its clarity, richness and superiority.

2. AH. S. 91

3. Peru - Tiru. 10—5

Tiruvāymoḷi

The greatness of the verses of Āḷvār is explained elaborately by our author in his work. The verses of all the Āḷvārs is named as Divya Prabandha⁴ and Aruḷicceyal⁵ which mean “Book of Divinity” and “Works of divine grace” respectively. These contain all the verses composed by the Twelve Āḷvārs and also 103 verses by Tiruvaraṅkattu Amutanār on Rāmānuja who was the prime cause for the popularization of the verses of Āḷvārs and spread of Vaiṣṇavism far and wide.

A Comparison—Vedas in Sanskrit and Tamil

Tiruvāymoḷi is one among the four works composed by Nammāḷvār. Those four are considered to be four vedas. Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār who came after Nammāḷvār, has given Six books. They are said to be like Six Aṅgās (Parts) of the Veda. The verses of other Eight Āḷvārs are said to be like Eight Upāṅgas or sub-parts of Tamil Vedas, like the Eight Upāṅgas of the Vedas. The verses of Tirumaṅkai contain more or less the same ideas expressed in the same way. So they are said to be parts or aṅgas of Nammāḷvār's verses. The verses of other Āḷvārs also explain the ideas contained in Tamil Vedas. They help to understand Tiruvāymoḷi. So they are said to be complementary to Nammāḷvār's works.⁶ One may raise a question whether it is correct to speak of the verses of few Āḷvārs who lived before the age of Nammāḷvār as upāṅgas. We find the eternal truths blossoming into a full form or stature in the works of Nammāḷvār only. So it is called Aṅgī (whole); and the works of other Āḷvārs' are called Aṅgas (parts to it). The wood is turned into a fine table. Every one looks for the table only which is in its full form. The wood though it existed before the coming into being of the table cannot be said to be superior to the table. In a way it is a part which helped in the formation of the table. In the same way texts written earlier to Nammāḷvār can also be said to be parts (Upāṅgās) which help in understanding the Tamil vedas.

4. AH. S. 44

5. AH. S. 63

6. AH. S. 45

Divyaprabandha is on an equal footing with all the śāstras put together. Among the śāstras, Vedas hold the highest place. Likewise Nammālvār's works are given the highest position in the Divyaprabandha. Tamil Vedas contain all the special features which are attributed to Sanskrit Vedas. They are:

1. being śāstras (i.e., Sciences or learned treatises).
2. being commands of the Lord.
3. being devoid of blemishes.
4. passing on from generation to generation orally and also being melodious to hear.
5. containing pure truths or facts only.
6. being eternal—i.e., without origin or end.

These features are common to both the Vedas. To this effect quotations are cited in the text⁷ taken from Aruḷicceyal. For Vedas which contain eternal truths Brahmā is said to be the originator. In the same way Nammālvār is said to be the author of Tamil Vedas. The Supreme Being is named as Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa. There are a few other deities also who are considered to be lower in rank. Among them Brahmā and Rudra are important. From the supreme God, Brahmā learnt the Vedas and taught them to Rudra who was created by him first. In the same manner Ālvār learnt Vedas from the supreme God who is his father and taught them to Maturakavi who became his first disciple. There is a tradition of naming Vedas after those who first learnt them and taught to others by reciting them. As the Ālvār learnt the Vedas directly from God and taught them to his disciple, so his verses which are Vedas in Tamil are named as "The words of Saṭakōpan"—(Saṭakōpan is another name for Nammālvār).

The hymns of Tiruvāymoḷi can be sung with music. So it is said to be on an equal footing with Sāma Veda which is also in the form of a musical composition. The ṛk (Rig Veda) which is short expands itself into sāma. So also the first work of Nammālvār which contains 100 hymns has expanded into Tiruvāymoḷi which contains about 1000 hymns. In Sāma Veda Chāndōgya is a specific kind. Tiruvāymoḷi has many similarities with that. So it is

compared to Chāndōgya which is superior to the various branches of Sāma Veda.⁸

Nammāḷvār's works seen as Upabrahmaṇās

Nammāḷvār's verses were compared with vedas earlier. They can be compared favourably with other explanatory treatises also. Vedas speak about all the aspects of God, such as His Swarūpa (essential nature), guṇa-(qualities) etc. There are other śāstras which take one aspect only as their main object of description. Pāñcarātra describes mainly the svarūpa and guṇa of lord Viṣṇu. The Purāṇās describe mainly the Vibhūti—the worlds which are under his control. The itihāsās describe mainly the various wonders performed by God. In the same way Nammāḷvār's verses describe mainly among others the beautiful arcā form of God. So, in this respect Tiruvāymoḷi and other hymns of Āḷvār can be called Upabrahmaṇās or explanatory treatises also.

A contrast

Though a comparison was made earlier, the superiority of the verses of Āḷvār is shown afterwards on three grounds namely origin, authorship and exclusiveness from extraneous ideas (purity of speaking about God only). The grace of Brahmā, the Rājasic god, is the origin for the work of Vālmīki—Rāmāyaṇa. From the Tāmasic god, Rudra, the saint Pulastya learnt the way of worshipping the supreme God. And in turn he taught it to Parāśara who wrote a treatise on it. Many seers have written Prabandhas in the same way. Āḷvār's prabandhas occupy a unique position among all these prabandhas. It is by the grace of the supreme Being, who has the pure knowledge—Sudha Śattva, and who has shown ways for realisation and who is the embodiment of wisdom and who manifests Himself in other Gods, the Āḷvār had composed his songs. Tiruvāymoḷi has come out from God Himself. This point is expressed by Āḷvār himself. Example.

*** தன்னை வைகுந்தனாகத் தன் சொல்லால் தானே துதித்து*⁹**

8. AH. S. 52 and 53

9. AH. S. 57

The superiority and greatness of Nammāḷvār in relation to the various saints is clearly brought out by the explanation given in sūrṇais (58, 59, 60, 61 and 62). In the Rāmāyaṇa written by Vālmīki and in Nārāyaṇa Kathā written by Vyāsa, we find various irrelevant and unimportant things spoken of. Whereas the Āḷvār begins his work with a determination to eulogize Tirumāl only and succeeds in it by expressing his intense love to Him in choice and mellifluous words. So the Āḷvār's verses are considered to be foremost among the four thousand verses, just as Purusa-sūkta among Vedas, Manusmrithi among Dharma śāstras, Gītā in the Mahābhārata and Viṣṇu purāṇa among the various purāṇas. In a few Sanskrit works contradictions between the treatises of the guru and disciple like Vyāsa and Jaimini are found. The commentators have to give reasons to explain them. Here in Tamil one finds all the Āḷvārs speak in one and the same voice. Further the obscure passages in Vedas and other śāstras are explained in the light of these Tamil verses of Āḷvār which are noted for their clarity and power of expression. These hymns are held as the supreme authority to decide controversial points.

The Vedas taking various forms

It is said in Skandam that when the supreme Being spoken of in the Vedas, took an avatār—incarnation of Rama, the Vedas manifested themselves in the form of Rāmāyaṇa. In the same manner the ancient Vedas which have the para aspect (supreme aspect) of God as object of description, took the forms of Pāñcārātra, Manu Dharma and Itihāsas while describing the *vyūha* form, indwelling state and the avatāra state of God. They again took a form in Tamil in order to describe the *arcā* form or the idols in temples. So it is another view that only the sanskrit vedas through the Āḷvār revealed themselves in Tamil.¹⁰

Here again the author raises a question why the same ideas in one language should be expressed or revealed in another language. What is the purpose behind it? He maintains that by this process the Vedas became firstly clarified and capable of revealing their inner meanings. This aspect is explained with the simile of rivers

the Kāvēri, and the Tāmaraparaṇi. The waters that fall from the tops of hills are mixed with mud and are not clear. The same water, when it reaches the bathing ghats of Śrīraṅkam or Āḷvārtirunakari, becomes clear and it is possible for persons to see all the things at the bed of the river. Similarly the Vedas become clear and they show their hidden meanings when they appear in Tamil through Āḷvār. Secondly they become easier, sweeter and more useful for many purposes at all times and for all the people. This idea is made clear by the following example. The brackish sea water when taken away and poured from above by the cloud, becomes sweet, and useful for many purposes at all times and for all. In the same way the Vedic ideas when they come through the mouth of Āḷvār in Tamil language get the special qualities referred to above.

Thirdly, the vedic truths become universal *i.e.*, useful for all irrespective of caste or creed when rendered through the medium of the prabandham. This is brought out by the simile of gold pot and mud pot. The Vedas in Tamil are compared to a gold pot by the author. Even in the present day society we find that there are no restrictions for the use of a gold vessel by all. And it does not become tainted by that. It is not so in the case of a mud pot.

Thus the power of Āḷvār conjoined with the advantages of the Tamil language and its lovable qualities is expressed here giving no place for any kind of doubt.

Tiruvāymoḷi and Bhagavad Gītā—A comparison and contrast

The Gītā which comprises Eighteen chapters is cast in the form of an advice given by Lord Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna in the battle field. In it is explained the various ways that lead to God realisation, in a brief and direct manner. This work is said to be the essence of vedas and therefore called an Upaniṣad.

Tiruvāymoḷi is a collection of one thousand and one hundred and two immortal hymns. These verses are spontaneous outpourings of Āḷvār's intuitional experience of the Lord. Such an expression in the form of verses, happens to reveal the exalted nature of God and is the easiest way for God-realisation.

Though the two sacred books differ in their origin and general character, they are similar to a great extent. Generally it is believed that the Gītā is a book which deals with Philosophy and Tiruvāymoḷi is a book of devotional songs. But our author emphasises in the very first sūṛṇai itself when comparing these two treatises that Tiruvāymoḷi is not exclusively a book of devotional songs. It presents a full philosophical view also. So it should be held as a book of wisdom. The expression used to mention Tiruvāymoḷi in the sūṛṇai is as follows.

‘மனஞ்செய் எல்லையில் ஞானஇன்பத்தை நின்மலமாக வைத்தவர்
ஞானப்பிராண ஞானத்து வைம்மின் என்ற இது’¹¹

The first line in this expression mentions God and Āḷvār who had the personal experience of God. To refer to God, the author has selected portions from three verses which are in the beginning middle and end of Tiruvāymoḷi. Each mentions the Nāna or wisdom of the Lord. Further in the second line our author mentions ‘ஞானப்பிராண ஞானத்து வைம்மின்’. ‘ஞானப்பிராண்’ means one who gives knowledge to all. ‘ஞானத்துவைம்மின்’ means make His sacred place of abode as an object of your mental perception. In expressing this idea he has selected and used the word Nāna in many places. It is felt by some that by this the author of Ācārya Hṛdayam suggests that Tiruvāymoḷi is a book of wisdom or philosophy.

We find that both Gītā and Tiruvāymoḷi express the following eighteen points in the same manner.

- 1, 2, 3. On the discernment of the eternal from the temporal. Namely differentiating between Paramātman and Jīvātman, among the various Jīvas and between the sentient and non-sentient.
4. The Soul or Ātman is immortal and the body is mortal.
5. God is the ruler or controller of all the universes.
6. He is immanent as well as an incarnation. He dwells in the hearts of his devotees and takes incarnations in order

to be easily accessible to them. This is called the Saulabhya quality of God.

7. In accepting his devotees he shows equality for all.
8. The effect of akaṅkāra or egoism.
9. The power of senses.
10. The superiority of the mind over the senses.
11. Controlling of the organs.
12. The kinds of virtuous men who are on the devotional path (seekers after salvation).
13. Differentiation between dēvas and asuras—The good and the wicked.
14. The effect of having many glories-worlds - as his own (possessions).
15. Vision of the divine cosmic form (Visvarūpa Darśana).
16. Bhakti with its aṅgās or accessories.
- 17 & 18. Prapatti with its aṅgās or accessories and prapatti or self surrender (to God).

On account of the similarity in explaining the above mentioned eighteen ideas, it is proved that Tiruvāymoḷi and Gītā are books of equal status.

Superiority of Tiruvāymoḷi

1. *The authorship:* God is spoken of as real or Tattva in Bhāratam.¹² In Gītā, Krishna says to Arjuna “the learned who have known the tattva or real will impart spiritual knowledge to you.”¹³ From this it is suggested that only the learned are eligible to impart spiritual knowledge to others.

The author of Gītā is a Tattva himself and the author of Tiruvāymoḷi is the leading Tattvañāni or one who has known or learnt the Tattva (God). So, as per the Gītā also Āḷvār who is a Tattvañāni is the fittest person to speak on the subject of praising

12. Bhār – San 347–83

13. Gītā. 4–34

God and instructing others. By this ingenious way of argument our author expresses the superiority of Tiruvāymoḷi. Is it not true that praise by others is a desirable one and that will induce confidence in others than self adoration? In Tiruvāymoḷi the praise of God is sung by Āḷvār.

2. *Immediate purpose or object:* The immediate purpose of Gītā was the victory of the five Pāṇḍavas over the Kauravas numbering one hundred. Their end was envisaged, whereas the aim of Tiruvāymoḷi was the Jīvas losing their hearts in the Lord and also ending of their attachment to the Twenty four tattvas and the experience of the Twenty fifth tattva i.e., the Ātman itself. So, though both are helpful for Mōksha, we find a difference in the immediate purpose in their appearance. The whole object of Tiruvāymoḷi was to help persons to attain Mōksha or salvation and salvation alone. In the case of Gītā it cannot be said so. In that respect the superiority of Tiruvāymoḷi is established.

3. *Disparity found in the beginning and the end:* In the beginning of Gītā Arjuna stood as a disciple of Krishna and requested him to command him. So, Krishna began his advice in a pleasant mood. In the end we find that Arjuna was not fully convinced of the arguments of Sri Krishna; contrary to that we find the Āḷvār beginning his advice to the people in a gloomy mood. Later on he finds all the people have become devoted to God and feels extremely joyous and blesses them. The book ends with a satisfaction on the part of the author. In Gītā, Arjuna agreed to fight but the attainment of the final goal is not expressed. In Tiruvāymoḷi we find the advice of Āḷvār has given its full benefit. This is another aspect where Tiruvāymoḷi excels the Gītā.

4. *Superiority in the aspects mentioned:* In Gītā while addressing Arjuna, Krishna says "you surrender yourself to me as the only refuge." Here we find only the injunction. In Tiruvāymoḷi Āḷvār instructs people as follows: "You meditate on the feet of Śrī Nārāyaṇa without any delay and attain salvation."¹⁴ 2. "I who have no refuge have attained willingly Your (God's) feet"¹⁵. Herein both preaching and practising (precept and practice)

14. Tiru. 4-1-1

15. Ibid. 6-10-10

are found. So in this respect also Tiruvāymoḷi occupies a superior position.

5. *Getting the status of a pramāṇa:* We find Āḷvār citing Gītā as a pramāṇa in his work. Because of that the Gītā gets a higher status among the śāstras. A few treatises though given by Lord himself in the form of Buddhāmuni and Kapilāmuni, have not been respected by all, because they have not been accepted, as Pramāṇas or authoritative texts by the learned seers of the Vedas and their followers. So the greatness of Gītā lies in its being accepted by Vedic rishis. In the case of Āḷvār's works no such condition is laid. This is another aspect for the greatness of Tiruvāymoḷi.

Thus with a deeper analysis the superiority and greatness of Tiruvāymoḷi over the Gītā in five respects is firmly established by our author.

Condemnation of Hatred towards Language

Great Books need not be in a particular language. One should not consider the language in which a book is written for deciding its merit. The contents of it should be taken as the criterion for accepting or rejecting it. Treatises which concern themselves with the Godly aspect can be taken as acceptable and all the others unacceptable. Contrary to this, to say that whatever is written in Sanskrit should only be accepted is not a fair and reasonable argument. If it is so one may have to accept even non-religious books and also which treat unrealities as real, on the ground that they are written in the Sanskrit language. This in no way is conducive to progress or well-being. So, to discard 'Āḷvārs' verses 'on account of its language is completely erroneous.'¹⁶

In (Sanskrit) Vedas, which depict ably the qualities of God, the rubbish is which is in praise of mortal men. In Southern Language Tamil, verses which are sung in praise of God are scriptures (sacred hymns). Those who understand this, to whatever caste or creed they may belong, will become highly respectable dēvas and attain realisation or Mōksha. Those who do not under-

stand this, even if they be highly learned and belong to the high caste of Brāhmins, should be considered as out-castes.¹⁷

This is the idea our author expresses very clearly and forcefully in his work. Of course when he expresses this, he only follows the tradition of the Ājvārs and Ācāryas of Vaiṣṇavism. From this one can infer that there were a set of learned people who considered the Sanskrit vedas only as Pramāṇās and Tamil, the native language, cannot be considered on a par with Sanskrit. Our author feels that their idea is entirely wrong and he has no hesitation in condemning them outright.

Our author's earnest desire was that Tiruvāymoḷi should be recited by all and its contents - Philosophical and spiritual should be understood by everybody. Only that perhaps induced him to write this work. From his work, first it was explained how the author proves the equality of Tamil with Sanskrit. Tamil also possesses Vedas and they are the works of Nammālvār. Then the Tamil Vedas were compared with universally accepted Vedas in Sanskrit. Next Tamil Vedas were compared with upabrahmaṇās or explanatory treatises of various seers and their superiority over them was established. The third exposition was that these are other manifestations of Vedas that came to describe mainly the Arcā form and Avatāra forms in Tamil. The speciality in the forms and the treatises which describe them was brought out with apt similes. Afterwards the comparison of Tiruvāymoḷi with Bhagavad Gītā and how it excels Gītā in certain respects was discussed. In the end our author's vehement condemnation of language hatred was expressed.

From the way of treatment of these ideas by our author, one is able to understand his deep knowledge in Vedas, Upaniṣads and purāṇas, and his intense love for God and God's servants and respect for the Tamil devotional scriptures which lead one towards Godhead.

CHAPTER IV

ALAKIYAMAṆAVĀLANĀYANĀR ON CASTE SYSTEM AND CREED.

“Caste is not merely a social institution but part of Hinduism, which on that account has been described as a socio-religious system, for it is partly a social organisation based on caste and partly a religious belief, or congeries of beliefs. Caste is, in fact, the steel frame binding together the many beliefs massed together in Hinduism.” So writes Mr. L.S.S.O’ Malley in his book on Indian Caste customs.¹ This is the popular belief. But Ācārya Hṛdayam partly disproves it. So the necessity arises for an analysis of the author’s conception of caste system in his days. It is believed that Vaiṣṇavism which gives equal opportunity to every man, woman and child to attain salvation through Bhakti, is the most democratic of all religions. We find in Aḷakiyamaṇavāḷa Nāyanār the author of Ācārya Hṛdayam, a strong advocate of that idea. He condemns very vehemently the idea of examining the caste of a devotee or a servant of God. God’s servants have risen above the caste distinctions on account of their spiritual attainments; Bhakti is the intense love or longing for God. All those who have that love for God form into one class of people. Among them there is no distinction of caste or creed and this is forcibly emphasised by the author who shows many pramāṇas from the ancient authoritative texts. We shall examine in detail the various points our author mentions in this work.

“ஜாதி ஆசிரம திசைகளில் பேதிக்கும் தர்மங்கள் போலே”²

This is a simile used by our author in sūṛṇai No. 31. It means that “just as the Dharmas or duties of men differ according to their castes, Āsrama or stage in life and performance of sacrifices (Yagñās).” This statement alone is sufficient to prove that our author accepts generally the various differences that were in vogue

1. Indian caste customs – p. 19

2. Ācārya Hṛdayam Sūṛṇai – 31

during those days. There were four varṇas or castes namely (1) the Brāhmins, the priestly and learned class, (2) the kṣhatṭriyas, the military and governing class, (3) the Vaiśyas, who were traders and agriculturists and (4) the sūdras who were the servants and menials of the three higher orders and were also engaged in industrial work. Secondly the four stages of life were the Brahmacharya, the householder, the Vānaprastha and the ascetic. And thirdly the Jōthistōma yagnās etc., were also referred to by him.

Our author speaks about two different aspects namely attainment of Brāhmaṇyam and the attainment of Vaiṣṇavism. Brāhmaṇyam is the state of Brahmin-hood and Vaiṣṇavism is the state of being a vaiṣṇavite. The first one is attained by reciting, understanding and practising the Vedas. This of course has been restricted to the first three varṇas only. By reciting, understanding and practising the Tamil Vedas, the verses of Nammāḷvār, the latter state is attained. After giving these two definitions, our author raises a question, that among these two, which is more important and indispensable. He answers it, as follows:

Brāhminhood is respected as long as it goes with the vaiṣṇavite path. Exclusive brāhminism will lose its prestige and would not be respected. Even the birth of such a man will be questioned or doubted.³ Our author uses a term 'அயற் சதுப் பேதிமார்' which is used contemptuously to denote the brāhmins, who are not vaiṣṇavites. From this it is evident that our author gives the first place to the devotional path of praying to God Tirumāl only. He holds that devotion to God is superior to anything else in this world, including the learning of sacred vedas. According to him Tiruvāymoḷi stands in the foremost place in making people devoted to God—*Mahāviṣṇu* or *Tirumāl*.

Āḷvārs belonged to various castes from the highest to the lowest. The most important person among them was Nammāḷvār who was born in the 4th Varṇa. Our author categorically states that to examine the birth or caste of Āḷvār is a sin. He goes to the extent of citing quotations from the ancient texts to the effect that to examine the caste of a devotee is as absurd as examining the genital passage of the mother through which one was born.

3. Ācārya Hrdayam Sūṇai – 38.

He further states that to reject the sacred verses of Āḷvār on the ground that they were given by a person who was born in the fourth Varṇa is an absurdity and so not at all proper. He convinces those people who argue in that strain by saying that if that were the criterion to accept or reject śāstras then we have to reject on the same ground Mahābhārata and Gītā which are considered to be two good authoritative works by one and all. Because the author of Mahābhārata was the son of a fisher woman and the author of Gītā, Sri Krishṇa belonged to a low caste. In this connection our author proves beyond doubt the superiority of Āḷvār over Vyāsa and other seers in the following respects viz., caste, their mothers, place of birth, the river ghat and villages with which they have been associated.⁴

Emperumān the chief of Dēvas was born as a man to protect the world from evils. He came in the form of Rama. In Ramayana it is found that after his conquest of Rāvaṇa, Rāmā was praised by all including Brahma who is said to be the Lord of creation. They extolled Him saying that he was Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself. Rāmā told them that he considered himself as the son of Dasaratha and he was proud to be a man. Once Sri Krishṇa protected the cowherds who were called Āyas from the torrential rain and wind, by raising Gōvardhana mountain as an umbrella. People who witnessed this marvellous deed praised him very much. At that time He explained to them that He was neither a dēva nor an arakka. But He was a simple man, a relative of the cowherds. And so they should think of him as one among themselves and not otherwise. The greatness of God lies in His birth in this world. Only in the form of his incarnation, His qualities shine. So it is said that those who have known the value of selfless service to God (Kaiṅkarya) will scorn or despise even taking the birth of a Brahma which is the most highest of all the births. Because that will be a cause for ego or Āṇava in one's mind, which is opposed to the essential nature of ātman. So, for them, the birth which is helpful to do service to God and which would not create a ego in their minds and which have been described in the Tiruvāymoḷi 'Paṇṭainālāl,' is a proper one and that will make the ātman shine.⁵

4. Ācārya Hṛdayam Sūṛṇais – 77-78-79 & 80.

5. Periya. A – 79

Because of the birth of Āḷvār in this world in the fourth Varṇa, the world attained numerous benefits.⁶ God took birth as Gōpāla among the cowherds in order to raise the dignity of the Yatu vamsa which lost its prestige owing to a curse. He came in the form of a pig to restore the earth to its original position when it sank in the deluge. Just like that the birth of Āḷvār in the fourth varṇa is a clear proof that one's pride of birth is unfounded. He showed them the truth by his own action. And only to redeem them from their egoism about their caste, He adopted this way. The author, to prove this idea, quotes profusely from many ancient texts and also mentions acts of many reverential seers to show that they were above all these differences. (This is emphasised by citing the preachings and practices of olden day ācāryas). Eight prominent examples are given below as shown by our author.

1. The following passage is found in Bhāratam as the words of Lord Kriṣṇa. The Lord says "He who loves my devotees, who is interested in worshipping me, personally offers prayers to me, who avoids vain show while doing my deeds, who is interested listening to stories about me, who manifests external signs of intense devotion at heart such as tearful eyes and trembling voice, who is always meditating on me and who does not expect any reward from me for actions—He who displays these eight modes of devotion, though he be a melēcha—a foreigner by birth, he is sacred Brāhmin. He is the seer, richest person, the ascetic and the learned. The ñāna has to be imparted to him. Knowledge or wisdom has to be learnt from him. He is a person to be respected like me." "The water used for washing his feet attains sacredness and the food left over by him has the value of offerings to God." The very same ideas were expressed by Āḷvārs also. Those words are given in original form below:

“பழுதிலா ஓரடிகலாற்றுப் பலசதுப் பேதிமார்கள் இழிகுலத்
தவர்களேலும் எம்மடியார்களாகில்,
தொழுமின் நீர் கொடுமின் கொண்மின்”⁷

“கடல் மல்லைத் தலசயனத்து உறைவாரைக் கொண்டாடும்
நெஞ்சுடையார் அவர் எங்கள் குலதெய்வமே”⁸.

6. AH. S.S. 82 & 83

7. Tirumālai – 42

He who has a heart which thinks or contemplates highly of the Lord who is sleeping on the serpent at the 'Kaṭal Mallaittalam' is my family God.⁸

2. Nampāṭuvān was a devotee born in a very low caste. But he praised God daily just like the three other high caste devotees. The ascetic Visvāmitra awoke Sri Rama from sleep. Periyāḷvār awoke Sri Kriṣṇa from slumber to receive his offerings. Another great Āḷvār who always compared himself in a humble way to the dust at the feet of God's servants and on that account was called Toṇṭar aṭippoṭi Āḷvār has given songs which are in the form of awaking from sleep the Lord of the great temple at Sri Raṅkam. Nampāṭuvān attained the same status of these three personages, irrespective of his caste. Because Nammāḷvār speaks that even if one is born in a caste inferior to the lowest of the four castes, if he becomes a servant of Lord Nārāyaṇa and sings His praises then he will be considered by him (Āḷvār) as his family God. Nampāṭuvān attained that status.

There was a brāhmin Sōmasarma by name. He did not complete the yāka he undertook to perform. He died while he was doing the yāka and so he became a devil in his next birth and wandered every where.

It is found in the book 'Kaika Makātmīyam' that the Brahmarāṭshas - the devil Sōmasarma - once surrendered to Nampāṭuvān requesting him to redeem him from the sin by virtue of his songs. Nampāṭuvān by singing songs on God relieved Sōmasarma from his state of devilhood. Thus we find that the devotee who was born in a very low caste can redeem a brāhmin, that too by doing his own duty of singing God in the right way. That this devotion is more valuable than the caste or varṇa in which one is born, is brought out clearly by this instance.

3. A verse of Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār gives us the following idea; It explains the transformation of a hunter into a man of highly respected race of a king. Gukapperumāḷ who was a hunter and on that account was considered low in birth, occupation and learning became a lovable friend of Rāma who was the chief of

lyōdya and was in a high position in his birth, occupation and earning and because of his identity with Dharma or virtue was poken of as the chief of Dēvas. This poor, destitute, low born person⁹ 'ஏழை, ஏதலன், கீழ்மகன்' was accepted by Sri Rama who was the avatār of God, as his equal friend through his loving words 'you are my intimate friend.' He also told him that his own brother would become his (Guka's) younger brother thenceforth. This suggests that whatever was ordered by Guka had to be done by Lakshmaṇa. By that Gukaperumāl became the elder brother of Lakshmaṇa. His intimacy became so close that on the very same night when he became friendly with Rama he stood with word in his hand during the night in protection of Sri Rama. Guka perhaps had a doubt about the faithfulness of his younger brother to Rama. But again when the other brother Barata came to citrakūṭa with agony of separation, we find Guka explaining to Barata the unique serviceable nature of Lakshmaṇa. In this way Gukapperumāl, though he was born in a so called low caste, becomes a person of Itṣvākuvamsa to which Rama belonged, surely on account of his intense devotion to Sri Rama.

4. Rama who sent Hanumān as his messenger to Sītā Dēvi, later on when he met the poor ascetic woman Sapari in the forest, became a guest of her. Krishṇa who went on an errand to Duriyōdana on behalf of pāṇḍavas stayed with Vitura who was said to be of low birth and dined with him leaving aside the mansions of other respected persons like Bhīṣma and Durōṇa. Vitura's offerings were considered by Krishṇa as pure and sacred. Hanumān, the Monkey, went as a messenger of Rama and found out Rama's wife who was imprisoned by Rāvaṇa. Many helped Rama for searching his wife and in conquering Rāvaṇa. But all of them got something in return for their help to Rama. Hanumān who was the son of *Vāyu*—the wind God—did selfless service. So to honour him Rama sat along with him and had his dinner. He was not neglected on account of his birth.

These three episodes mentioned above are quoted often by many to show the greatness and simplicity of Sri Rama and Sri Krishṇa. But here it is noteworthy that these are referred to prove that Gukan the hunter chief, Sapari the hunter woman, Vitura

who was not of a high birth and Hanumān the monkey were not despised by the avatārs of God. On account of their intense devotion or piety they were considered superior to many a learned and lovable person.

5. It is said in the story of Krishṇa that he was born in Yatu vamsa but brought up among the cowherds as one among them. Thus he became a person of two castes in one birth and yet he was considered as the prime person to receive the honours from the hands of Dharma in the sacrifice performed by him. There is another instance also. One among the twelve Āḷvārs who was born in Tirumālīcai as a child of an ascetic and was brought up in another place among the low caste persons and on that account attained two castes in one and the same birth, was selected as the proper person to receive the first honours in a Yagña—sacrifice—performed by a learned brāhmin Perumpuliyūr Aṭikaḷ.

6. Among the five Pāṇḍavas, Dharma was the eldest. He did the last rites for Vitura after his death, though he was not his own son. The reason for this was said to be the abundant wisdom of Vitura and also the words Dharma heard as ‘Asarīri.’ That cleared his doubt whether he can perform the rites or not. Among the four sons of Daśarata, Rama was the eldest. He was called Perumāḷ. He did the last rites for Jaṭāyu, the king of eagles who died in the fight with Rāvaṇa waged in order to release Sītā Dēvi from his clutches. Though his brother was also available there in the forest, Rama took the burden on his own shoulders. That shows his love for that hero and the respect he had for the eagle king. Peria Nampi, Tirukkōṭṭiyūr Nampi and Peria Tirumalai Nampi are three ascetics who were the disciples of Āḷavantār. These three later on became the ācāryas of Sri Rāmānuja. The first of these three, Peria Nampi did the last rites for Māraṇēr Nampi who was a low born. For this action he had the sanction of his guru also.

These three incidents have been mentioned here to prove that in the eyes of great men - Ācāryas-only the qualities and actions of persons are valued, as against the caste. As a matter of fact it seems that they do not pay any heed to the caste or status of devotees in this world.

7. A few more incidents that happened in the three great Vaiṣṇavite temples of Tamil Nāṭu are quoted below to show that through the ages it is the noble devotion and purity of devotees that was respected by learned kings and brāhmins and seers irrespective of the caste of the persons concerned.

The Vēṅkaṭa hill is spoken of as a maṇṭap of flowers. There lived a potter Kuṟumpaṟutta Nampi who was devoted to God and so made flowers in the remnant mud used for making pots and offered them to God at the Vēṅkaṭa hills. On seeing his intense devotion to God the king of the land one Tonṭaimān became his devotee and followed his foot steps.

Kāñcīpuram is spoken of as a mansion or maṇṭap of sacrifice (Tiyāka maṇṭap). One Tirukkacci Nampi was there doing service to God of Kāñcīpuram. The great Ācārya Sri Rāmānuja became devoted to him and followed his way.

Sriraṅkam is described as a maṇṭap of enjoyment. There lived Tiruppāṇāḷvār who sang always the praise of God, Sri Raṅka-nātha, through his violin or viṇā. He belonged to a low caste and was doing service to the Lord by singing his praises standing away from the temple. One learned brāhmin Lōkasāraṅkamuni, by the commands of God recognised his greatness and did service to the Āḷvār. Those who know all these incidents can understand rightly which is high birth and which is not.

8. Sri Rāmānuja thought that he became purer by touching the body of piḷḷai Uṟaṅkāvillitāsar who was not of a high caste. He demonstrated this to others.

Nampiḷḷai a great scholar and brāhmin by birth considered that the offerings to God became purer by the touch of the piḷḷai ēṟu tiruvuṭai tāsar who was a low born.

Naṭuvil Tiruvīti Bhaṭṭar who was a vaiṭika himself thought that his new house constructed in the North Street of Sriraṅka, became purer by the tread of one piḷḷai Vānamāmalai tāsar who was of low caste but a true devotee of God.

One who knows the deeds of these people of wisdom can understand which is high birth and which is low.

One who has no knowledge about God is low born. It is explained with evidences - examples - in sūṇai No. 86.

Which is high birth and which is low cannot be understood by one, unless one knows that the essential nature of ātman is to do selfless service to God. Only on this basis things should be judged. So what is not connected with God is not high.

“A Brāhmin might have learnt the four vedas. Yet if he does not have the knowledge about Vāsudēva, the supreme Being, then he will be considered a brāhmin ass, which bears the burden of Vedas.” No respect need be shown to his Varṇa or caste.

“O! king! even a pulaiya who eats the meat of dog, if becomes a devotee of Viṣṇu then he becomes superior to a brāhmin. Even if he is an ascetic, if he has no devotion to Lord Tirumāl then he will be regarded as a low born, inferior even to a Pulaiya who lives on dog’s meat.” It is only the devotion to God that is respected and not even the ascetic if he has no devotion to God.

In respect of one’s actions also, the same principle holds good. Work which does not make one attached to the world is good work or karma. That study which helps one towards salvation is true study. The work done for wealth and worldly pleasures is merely an exertion. All other studies that do not help for salvation are like magical shows and so they are useless.¹⁰

And so the study which leads one to God realisation should be considered as the real study worth the name. Other studies are said to be like learning to stitch shoes *i.e.*, they are not considered to be of superior nature. The following is found in Mukunta-mālai, a Sanskrit work by Kulasēkara Āḷvār.

“The reciting of the vedas amounts to crying in the wilderness, if it is done without true devotion to Nārāyaṇa; Observance of the daily viratas prescribed by the Vedas becomes cause only for the emaciation of this body; Doing public service like digging of ponds etc., amounts to pouring Āhuti (Ghee) into ashes instead of fire; Going on a pilgrimage and taking bath in sacred waters becomes equal to the elephant taking its bath” As mentioned

10. AH. S. 86 quoted from Viṣṇu Purāṇam 1-19-41.

here, the karmas or practices of people not associated with God become useless like the ghee poured into ashes.

“The sages say that the words which describe or speak about the qualities, actions or deeds and incarnations of Lord Kriṣṇa will help for the purgation of sins and attainment of sacred things. Further those words make the people live a good life. Words which are not used for that purpose though beautiful in rhetoric are like the ornaments put on a dead body.¹¹”

The reciting of Vedas, learning of śāstras and doing Japam and Tapam (penance and meditation) by one who has no devotion to Lord Viṣṇu is like adorning a dead body.

By these quotations it is suggested that the utterances that are unrelated to God and the learning and actions (behaviour) of those who have no devotion to God, are like the decorations made for a dead body.

An Ancient quotation runs like this:

God incarnates Himself as a dēva or a man. His devoted servants attain the same status by their caste, behaviour and qualities. There is nothing despicable about it. On the contrary it is a welcome evolution, because they become so, only for the benefit of the world. The excellence of learning and performing duties on the part of non-devotees of God is like the embellishment done to a widow. It is detestable. The association with God is compared to the sacred thread (wedding ring or tāli) worn by a lady as a mark of her marriage with a man. If one has no devotion to God then all his other excellences become, like the ornaments put on a widow. They are not useful. So the sages hate them.

Thus, in the opinion of the author, the varṇa, āśrama, learning and duties only of those persons who associate themselves with God are considered to be valuable. In the absense of devotion to God the other qualities, however noble, become low in the eyes of the sages or greatmen. There is no point in holding them high. They are liable to be despised. This has been explained in unambiguous terms by our author.¹²

11. A.H. S. 86 quoted from 10-18-12(Bākavatam)

12. AH. S. 86

Further, the author proves by pointing out the deeds done and utterances spoken of by the great men that the birth which is helpful or agreeable to do service to God is the highest birth.

According to vaiṣṇavite belief the Nityasūris are those who are eternally free from bondage. They are great men. Owing to the intense desire to do service to Lord Nārāyaṇa they have taken the birth of the serpent which is useful for Him as a soft bed or Karuṭa (a kind of kite) which serves Him as a vehicle to ride on or Thulsi (a plant) which is worn by Him lovingly. They attained these forms at their own request.

The chief of all Jīvas is Brahma. Siva is also one of the chiefs. “I would not prefer the glorious status of these two persons but I earnestly wish to be a kaṭampa tree or a kunta tree on the banks of the river Yamuna where Sri Kṛṣṇa was born, brought up and spent his days.” This is desired because Sri Kṛṣṇa loved to climb those trees.

The ladies who followed Kṛṣṇa in his path renouncing their own kith and kin and also the path followed by the respected people, went through the forest of Brindāvan, (forest of thorns). I want to become one of the plants or creepers in that forest where the feet-dust of those ladies should have fallen.¹³

Kulasēkara Āḷvār in his Perumāl Tirumoli sings with intense devotion that he wants a birth in the Vēṅkaṭa hills either as a bird or a beast or a plant which is associated with the sacred hills.¹⁴

‘I desire to be born even as a small insect if it is in the mansions of Sri Vaiṣṇavas who find delight in doing service to God.’¹⁵ The insect is preferred because it has its birth and death in that same place.

Thus in the foregoing instances we find that greatmen like Sukar, Uttavar, Kulasēkarar and Āḷavāntār longing to take the birth of a beast or a plant, if it is possible to live in a place sanctified by the Lord Kṛṣṇa or His beloved devotees.

It is said in the śāstras that a birth as a beast or as a bird or as a plant is attained by Jīvas owing to the sins committed by them

13. A.H. S. 87 quoted from Bākavatam 10-48-61

14. Ibid – quoted from Perumāl Tiru – 4.

15. A. H. S. 87 quoted from Āḷavāntār Stōtra 55.

in word or deed; but here it is stated, (1) The eternally free souls take these births willingly because they think that these will help them to be of service to Him according to His desires. (2) The persons who are after salvation and find enjoyment in doing service to Him pray for the births which are associated in any way with Him or with His devotees. So it can be said without fear of contradiction that the birth which is suited to do selfless service to God is the highest one. One may ask how can a tree, bird or an insect be considered superior to mankind. It cannot be but yet they too become glorious when they become associated with God. The differences in birth among the various living beings need not be cared for. In short there is no superiority or otherwise on mere birth alone, is the essence of the doctrine of the Ājvārs. The next question raised is whether the varṇa or caste is changeable.

One should not give respect to the varṇa to which a person belongs. The essential nature of ātman is to be dependent on God (சேஷத்வம்). The varṇa a person possesses becomes the cause of his ego. That is opposed to ātman's essential nature. So varṇa is the thing that has to be given up. Further one's birth in this world depends on his karma done in earlier births. That means it is of changeable nature according to its cause. So the persons who desire salvation would not entertain any favourable idea with regard to varṇa. The varṇa is changeable will be evident from the following incident.

Visvāmitra was born in Kshattriya race. He wanted to attain the status of a Brahma rishi and did penance for a very long time. Owing to that he was made a Brahma rishi by the learned rishi Vashisṭa. The same Vashisṭa was treated disrespectfully by a king. So, that king was cursed by the sons of Vashisṭa as to attain the status of a chaṇḍāla or a low born. That king Tirisaṅku who belonged to the famous Itsvāku dynasty was made to go to heavens by Visvāmitra by his spiritual strength. He performed a Yagña asking the king to wear his leather strap as his sacred thread usually worn during performing a sacrifice by a Brāhmin.

In this incident we find a king on account of his good actions becoming a rishi or a brāhmin without any change in his body. Another king on account of his bad deeds becomes a low born without any change in his body. We thus find Visvāmitra becoming

a brahma rishi. The instance of Tirisaṅku shows how he lost his status as a king and became a chaṇḍāla before he could be raised to the heaven created for him by Visvāmitra. Thus it is evident that the varṇa is changeable according to the karma or actions of a person.¹⁶

In this way we find that Aḷakiya maṇavāla Nāyanār emphasises that a true devotee of God should be respected irrespective of his caste or varṇa. He says that it is one of the greatest of offences to treat him with indifference, or contempt on the ground of his caste. His elder brother Sri Piḷlai Lōkācharya also says more or less in the same way.¹⁷ This is the view held by the southern school of Vaiṣṇavites.

But the learned ācārya of the northern school of Vaiṣṇavites Sri Vedānta Dēśika, though he speaks very highly of a true devotee of God, still maintain that as far as he lives in this world he has to follow the rules and regulations of caste in social life. He cites an example to prove his statement as follows: “The temple cow is certainly more worthy than other cows in as much as its milk, butter and the like are used in the service of God, but on that account it does not cease to be a cow.”¹⁸

Here it is not my intention to refute what has been said by great and revered Ācāryas. With great respect to his statement which is apparently argumentative, I put forth my doubt here. It is true that a cow cannot attain the status of a man. But it is accepted that it is a more worthy cow than other cows. Sri Aḷakiya maṇavāla Nāyanār says that true devotees become superior men. He does not say that they cease to be men till they are in that body. We do not see any difference in physical appearance among men who belong to various varṇas, such as we see between a cow and a man. So it is doubtful how far the analogy of a cow is appropriate in this context.

Further if we speak about the four varṇas alone, what is the place given to a foreigner who has newly adopted Hinduism or

16. AH. S. 89

17. Rahasya thirayasāra – introduction – P. 35.

18. Rahasya Thirayasāra – introduction – P. 35

Translated by Sri Rajagopala Ayyangar, M.R.

Vaiṣṇavism? Is there no place for such a man in Vaiṣṇavism which is the most universal religion according to our ācāryas?

I will quote a passage from Manu which corresponds with what is said by our author above. "A brāhmin who, omitting to study the Vedas, devotes himself to other pursuits soon becomes a śhūdra along with his family."¹⁹ Manu has gone further and said "that whereas a brāhmin can become a śhūdra if he lacks in brāhminic qualification, a śhūdra can become a Brāhmin."²⁰ This idea is still clearly described by our author in sūrnai 90.

The devotees of God are not sūdhras. They should be considered as Brāhmins who are servants of God. Among all the varṇas only those who have no love or devotion to God are sūdhras.²¹

So the non-devotees alone will come under the category of persons to be rejected. "O! king even the chaṇḍāḷa who eats the flesh of dog, if he becomes the devotee of Viṣṇu then he becomes superior to a Brāhmin,"²²

This prescribes that the devotees for whom their devotion to God is the true wealth, are the persons to be acceptable.

Those who understand this truth will get salvation or bliss. On the other hand those who try to examine or enquire into the caste of true Vaiṣṇavites, though they may be learned Brāhmins of the Vedas they will become low born chaṇḍāḷas immediately *i.e.*, then and there itself.²³

We may conclude: According to the author the distinction of high caste or low caste is not of much importance. All are equal in the eye of God. What confers worth on an individual is his devotion to God.

19. G.P. - 132 quoted from Manu 11-168.

20. Ibid - Manu 10-65

21. AH. S. 90 quoted from Bārata. Asva - 118 32

22. AH. SS - 86 and 90

23. Tirumālai - 43

CHAPTER V

BRIDAL MYSTICISM OF ĀḶVĀR AND ITS PHILOSOPHICAL INTERPRETATION.

Among the Tamil devotional songs, one can find verses in the special manner which the Tamils have evolved to describe the 'love' aspect of life. The special technique used by them is described in detail in their texts on grammar under the head 'Akapporuḷ.' The very same technique is employed in an admirable way by the ĀḶvārs, specially by NammāḶvār to convey their mystic experience. The most intimate relationship (between any two persons) in this world is that of a man and his lady love. The relation between God and the soul or ātman is considered to be of the same type and that is portrayed by ĀḶvār in his verses. God is the only hero and all others become heroines before Him. This concept is not peculiar to Vaiṣṇavism alone. Throughout the world we find in many languages devotional poems more or less of the same pattern.

Vaiṣṇava philosophy developed in Tamil from the time of the ĀḶvārs. NammāḶvār has written 4 treatises. In the first work Tiruviruttam, out of 100 verses except the first and the last, all the others are treated by the commentator, as belonging to the technique of love poetry. Even in Tiruvāymoḷi, the last work, out of a total of 100 parts, 27 parts are in Akapporuḷ type verses. ĀḶvār attains the state of a lady and considers the Lord as her husband and his spiritual experience is expressed in the language of love. He is named by the commentators as Parāṅkusa Nāyaki tēṇ; those poems are of three kinds; The first type as in the speech of a lady friend, the second type as in the speech of the mother and the third type as in the lady's own speech. Even though they appear as expressions of three different persons, actually it is the experience of ĀḶvār only. Just as a river in floods takes various courses and runs towards the sea, ĀḶvār's intensity of love takes various ways of expression. So this kind of expression does not stand as a hindrance in any way to ĀḶvār's experience.

This is the explanation our author gives in Ācārya Hṛdayam.¹ While sense pleasures are trivial and momentary, the bliss of God is eternal and infinite. In Tiruvāymoḷi while describing God's experience, one finds the verses are in the form of expressing bodily love or lust. It is objected to by a few. The celebrated commentator of Tiruvāymoḷi himself raises this question in the 4th sub-division of the first Ten when Āḷvār begins first to speak in the language of a lady. He answers that this does not denote worldly sensuous pleasures or Kāma. "The term Kāma connotes Viṣaya Kāma or hedonistic pleasure in psychology and ātmakāma or the desire for self-realisation spiritually and Bhagavat Kāma or love of God in the religious sense."² One should know the distinction between the Viṣaya Kāma (the desire for objects of the senses) and ātma Kāma (the desire for God). Ātman here refers to paramātman i.e., God. Only he who has good fortune attains this kind of desire for God.

Various kinds of opinions are expressed by different scholars with regard to verses which deal with love. Some feel even in such a widely accepted book as Tirukkuṟaḷ inclusion of a part on love has reduced its (moral) value. Others raise a doubt and ask why love language should be adopted while describing spiritual and devotional ideas. There are some others who strongly feel that love is not a thing to be hated. Love poetry deals with emotions which are fundamental and eternal. It is a unique feature in Tamil grammar to have for its subject matter idealised love life among other things. It is argued even Tiruvalluvar's inclusion of love in his work is a proof of its faultless nature. The commentators on the Akapporuḷ texts give their explanation as follows:

"Love poetry is only the beginning state. Through that the readers are drawn towards the final goal, the Godly aspects or the experience of bliss. It can be compared to the method of administering a non-palatable medicine coated with sugar or sweet thing." To give a brief answer to the question, the following remarks of the learned professor T. P. Meenākshisuntaranār can be quoted. He says "Akapporuḷ is the soul of Tamil language, but it is not understandable easily to many. That idea is made evident in the

1. AH. S. 131

2. Mystics and Mysticism by P.N. Srinivasachari – P. 295

commentary on 'Iṟaiyanār Akaporuḷ' by mentioning that it was difficult to know the truth of Akapporuḷ even for the poets, except at the instance of God Himself."³ Whatever may be the arguments adduced for the justification of the treatment of love in Tamil, one should understand that the Tamil spiritual saints like Āḷvār and Āṇṭāl have used that language and form only as a symbolism. Here God is the bridegroom and all his devotees who try to attain Him are his loving brides (So here there is nothing unreal and no occasion for deceiving). By introducing the symbolic language, Āḷvār makes the ideas vivid and easier to understand and to be of interest to all. This aspect is very clearly explained by our author in Ācārya Hṛdayam. He gives the (Swabhāvadēsa meaning) inner meaning for all the love language used by Āḷvār.

It is asked why Āḷvār should imitate the state of a lady in love. The answer is that he did not really try to imitate a lady. But actually as soon as he sees the beauty, valour and good nature of God, they make him feel like a lady in love. The essential quality of ātman is dependence on God. (Pāratantrya). So he attains the status of a lady before the Lord. According to some religions, women are not eligible for the attainment of mōksa. But here we find Āḷvār mentally becoming a lady and enjoying God. In Hindu purāṇas which are accepted as Pramāṇas by Vaiṣṇavite scholars, the following is stated. The rishis of Dhaṇḍa-kāraṇya who were attracted by the beauty of Rama prayed to him that they should be born as women in their next birth in order to enjoy him. Accordingly in the later avatār of Kriṣṇa the very same rishis were born as Gōpis and had enjoyment with him. If it can be accepted, what objection can there be to say that it is of a superior nature to attain the status of a lady immediately in this birth and enjoy the Lord? The commentators on Tiruvāymoḷi point out the inner meaning for all the verses given by Āḷvār in the form of a lady. The author of Ācārya Hṛdayam collects all those ideas which are found scattered, and apart from giving them in a clear and precise manner gives a few additional explanations also. The intention of the author in giving these explanations seems to be that verses of this kind should not be considered as inferior in any sense. Comparison of Āḷvār with

3. Akapporuḷum Aruḷicceyalum by Ramasamy Naidu, T.D.—
Introduction. — P. XVI

īṭā Dēvi on the similarity of their expressions and going against some of the traditions mentioned in Akapporuḷ, such as 'maṭal iṭtal' of a lady may be taken as meaning that the Kāma spoken of here in Tiruvāymoḷi is not the Viṣaya Kāma. Latter day grammar 'annirupāṭiyal gives rules for the treatment of love or Kāma in this manner.

Let us now consider the explanations given by our author.

‘ஞானத்தில் தம் பேச்சு; ப்ரேமத்தில் பெண்பேச்சு’⁴

This sūṇai explains the cause for the two types of verses found in Tiruvāymoḷi: while Āḷvār is in the state of knowledge he speaks in his natural form and while his love towards God overpowers him and he is in an intoxicated position, we find him speak in the nature of a lady. In the field of love, to make it intensive God plays a game of 'hide and seek.' In the very beginning itself the Lord gave Āḷvār the knowledg (or ṇānā) to understand Him and so he saw Him in his mind and enjoyed Him; that is called Saṁslēṣa (Union with Him). But he wanted to see Him with his physical eyes and embrace Him. That was not possible. That state is called Viṣlēṣa or separation from God.⁵ The major portion of the verses spoken of in the nature of a lady is found to have emerged while in the state of separation. Only one part containing ten verses deals with the joy experienced in Union.⁶ Again, whether he speaks in his natural form or in the transformed form of a lady, his essential nature is the same. In the expressions, we find only the gender is changed.

அடியோம் கொடர்ந்து குற்றேவல்' becomes 'அடிச்சியோம் அடிக்கீழ்க் குற்றேவல்' in the speech of the lady. So, it is obvious even the speech of a lady is a natural one to him and not alien.⁷

Āḷvār as a bride—A metaphor

Āḷvār attaining the supreme Being is spoken of as similar to a lady getting herself married to a bridegroom and united with him. In this respect a comparison is made.⁸

4. AH. S. 118

5. AH. S. 116

6. Tiru. 5-5.

7. AH. S. 120

8. Ibid. 121

A lady should have a mother, father and she should have something as food for her growth.

Vidyā - the knowledge of Tirumantra is the mother for the birth of Jīva. Ācārya is the father who brings it up. The name of the Lord is the food, milk and ambrosia which helps its growth.

Every lady would depend on a husband for her support and joy.

God who is the beautiful and the protector of the worlds is the bridegroom for the Jīva or soul.

The sacred thread or tāli is the symbol or sign for a lady, that she is wedded to one man. So also the Tirumantra which consists of three words and is made up of eight syllables in all, is the symbol that denotes that the soul is related to the Lord. The Tirumantra is compared to an imaginary thread which is formed by eight strands which constitute into three parts. Only the knowledge of Tirumantra reveals to ātman its relation with God. In this way the paramātman or God makes Jīva His own.

Even after the marriage is over, for four days the bride and bridegroom would not be allowed to have intimate connection or intercourse. The bride would neither leave the husband nor go close to him. But it is a decided fact that she is wedded to him only and he alone has the right to enjoy her. These two aspects are denoted by the two words of the Tirumantram (Om and the 4th case suffix in the last word). In the spiritual field what prevents both the Jīva and God is the body the former possesses. Somehow with great difficulty the four days (few days) are spent by the Jīva in this world.

Just as the bride goes to her husband's house leaving her place of birth and all her relatives, the Jīva which took its birth by the initiation into the Tirumatra by the Ācārya in this world, leaves its birth place and goes towards its husband's house. The bridegroom leads it through the path of light (Arcirādimārga) and on the way many people come and pay their respects to them (bride and bridegroom). As the bride reaches the outskirts of her husband's village, a bath for her is arranged by his relatives. So also the Jīva takes a bath in the sacred river Viraja, which will cleanse or wash its dirt or impurities. After bathing, ladies related to the husband will decorate the bride. So also the charming heavenly women will come with garlands and Tuḷasī, cosmetics,

ilks and various other ornaments and decorate it so as to be fit for the Lord's enjoyment and they will stand in readiness to do the needed services. Again just as the bride is received by the ladies respectfully in a manner fit for the occasion in her husband's house, the Jīva is also received by the young and lovable ladies of heaven. The Jīva will enter into the abode of the Lord of Sri /aikuntha and be united with Him. It is like the bride entering into the house of her husband. After the arrival of the bride, a feast will be arranged for her along with all the relatives. So also the Jīva will enjoy the company of the Lord along with all the eternally free Jīvas or souls there. The Lord will see that the Jīva gets all the enjoyments that the other freed souls experience. All the acts done by the bride till she embraces the broad shoulders of the Lord are done by Jīva or Ājīvār and he embraces the Lord giving him delight just like the Kaustubha (a precious stone) which shines in His chest as a sign of His supremacy over all. This is the similarity we find between Ājīvār (Jīva) and a lady who is in love. The speech of Ājīvār in the nature of a lady is not unnatural or alien to him. In this way through a longdrawn-out metaphor the nature of ātman is fully explained by our author.

It was already mentioned that among the speeches of Ājīvār in the form of a lady we find there are three categories namely the lady's speech, her companion's speech and the mother's speech. What is the real meaning of these three divisions? It is explained as follows:—

The companion is one who helps in the union of the hero and heroine. The knowledge of the relation or connection between the Soul and the God helps the former in the attainment of Him. This is expressed in the first-word of Tirumantram.—‘Om’ which denotes that the Soul solely exists for the purpose of God. This knowledge about the relationship is named as ‘the companion’ in the language of love poetry. That means the poems which appear as the speech of a lady companion, are given by Ājīvār when he was experiencing that state of mind.

It is truly the mother of a daughter who begets and brings her up on right lines. And the child grows up to youth and maturity experiencing the love natural to youth and longing to complete herself in her lover. But the mother would regulate the longings

and flutterings of the heart of youth resulting in the maiden awaiting her lover. She hurries - hastens - to go to his place to meet him. At that stage it is the mother who condemns her daughter by saying that it is for the man to come to her and herself going beyond the precincts of her house is against the family tradition and dignity. Those who have adopted Siddhōpāya (*i.e.*, the God as means to attain Him) have no cause for the delay in the coming in of the Lord. And so, while in separation, they hasten to attain their object immediately. Further, as they have known the supremacy- uniqueness- of their object of attainment they lose their patience in attaining Him through the proper order. In such a state it is the firmness or conviction in the adopted means which makes one feel that the haste shown in getting the object is not suited for the noble tradition of prapannakula-tīrat is a group of people who have surrendered their selves to God-and only the Lord should come and take them. Their duty is only to wait expecting His arrival. This aspect is represented in the second word in the Tirumantram. This aspect of 'conviction in the means' is said to be the mother. Therefore it should be understood that the verses in the form of a mother's speech are given by Āḷvār when he was in that state of mind. The lady in love has already met her lover and is attracted by his qualities. So she is intensely in love for him and even ready to break up the pride of her family tradition for the sake of meeting him. God is the controller and refuge of all. His qualities are denoted in the last word of the Tirumantram. Those qualities make one irritated over the delay in enjoying Him. So one forgets that He is the means for the attainment of the object and hastens to experience Him immediately. That state is called 'the lady in love.'

In Tiruvāymoḷi there are three parts of ten verses each as the speech of a lady companion. They are Tīrppārai Yāmini (4—6) Tuvaḷil Māmaṇi (6—5) and Karumāṇikkamalai (8—9). Let us consider their contents and also the philosophical meaning they suggest.

Tīrppārai Yāmini:

The ten verses which begin as Tīrppārai Yāmini are under the heading 'Veṇi Vilakku' *i.e.*, stopping the act of propitiation (of the wild Gods). After the first union with the lover, the lady

could not bear his separation. The agony of separation made her lose her colour and glow. She faints. The mother on seeing the state of her daughter becomes very much perturbed. She thinks that her madness is due to hysteria or possession by evil spirits and so she tries to remedy it by propitiating them with the offer of flesh and toddy. There comes the companion of the lady who knows the real cause of her disease and she would not tolerate even the mention of her connection with anybody else except the Lord. She interferes and gives out the real reason for the lady's disease and stops the act of propitiation.

The hastening to attain the object, does not yield its fruit. So the agony increases. Due to that the conviction, 'that He is the only means,' begins to slacken. It gives way to take up other means such as doing spiritual rituals for the removal of disease and sorrow. In that stage the knowledge about the relationship with God (the sambandha jñāna) comes in and instructs that this disease has come on account of the gracious look of the Lord and the first experience she had with Him. It is not due to any external reason. So by performing rituals the disease cannot be cured. It is against the nature of the soul and that will cause its destruction. So the effort to pursue external remedies should immediately be given up. This is the real meaning the analogy suggests.

Tuvalil Māmaṇi:

This contains verses that are addressed to the mothers of the lady in love, by her companion. The mothers try to redeem the lady from her intense zeal for the place Tulaivilli Maṅkalam. But her companion tells them that they were the persons who were responsible for her zeal towards Tulaivilli Maṅkalam. And it is impossible for them now to redeem her from it in which she has fully interested herself. So she requests them to abandon their idea.

Love for the Arcā form of God is the easiest means of attaining Him. The conviction in it is shaken by the needless doubt whether the hastening to attain Him which arose on account of the knowledge about the uniqueness of the upāya-God, has made the urge for God to resort to other means. The conviction tries to prevent the hastiness from taking initiative. In that state the sambandha

ñāna (the knowledge about the relationship) comes in to instruct (1) The zeal shown by the soul which exists for the purpose of the lord, will be pleasing or gratifying to the Lord and it cannot be considered as a means adopted to attain Him. (2) Because it arose on account of knowing the uniqueness of the Lord, it cannot be prevented. (3) The idea that the zeal can be prevented is opposed to its essential nature of being dependent on God i.e., Pāratantrya. So the idea of preventing the hastening to attain God on account of zeal, has to be abandoned. The knowledge about the relation makes it clear.

Karumāṇikkamalai:

The lady companion prevents the attempts of her relatives for the marriage of the lady. She understands from the changes in her appearance and speech that she should have had union with the Lord of Tiruppuliyūr. Because of her intimacy with the lady she thinks that if the lady in love learns that arrangements are being made for her marriage, even that idea of marriage with a human being would be unbearable to her. She may even die on hearing it.. So the companion decides to prevent that arrangement and therefore she discloses to her relatives that the lady seems to have had union already with the Lord of Tiruppuliyūr. That is why she is always repeating the qualities and actions of that God. So, what they do now is not a proper thing. They ask her whether the Lord has all the required qualifications to marry this lady. She replies that He is endowed with all the requisite qualifications and even if He has no such qualifications the lady has attained a state of mind as to be dependent on Him only and not on anybody else. So the idea of marriage with any one except God should be given up.

The state of hastening to attain the object is seen from the point of view of the state of conviction of means (conviction in upāya). Without (knowing its usefulness or value) or understanding that it would not be a suitable thing except the Lord, some other objects were thought of. At that juncture the knowledge of relationship (sambandha ñāna) discloses that even the mention of dependence on others will destroy its essential nature. He is the only object who can give enjoyment to it and apart from that its natural quality is of being dependent on Him. On these grounds it is

proved that the soul is a śeṣha (which lives for service) to Him only. This is the idea expressed in the above Tiruvāymoḷi.

Thus from the expression of the companion of the lady in the three Tiruvāymoḷis mentioned above, it is revealed that the soul is neither dependent on others nor is it independent of itself and it exists solely for the service of the Lord. Therefore it is evident that all these three Tiruvāymoḷis are the expressions, when Āḷvār was in the state of Sambandha jñāna (knowledge about relationship).

The Mother's speech—7 Tiruvāymoḷis:

In 'Āṭi Āṭi' (2—4) we find Āḷvār—soul—withering like a creeper without its support, on account of the non-availability of the company of aṭiyārs - the servants of God or bhaktas. In 'Pālanāy ēḷulaku' (4—2) Āḷvār desires to enjoy things used by God in his past avatār as Krishna and due to that becomes emaciated. In 'Maṇṇairuntu' (4—4) Āḷvār Nāyaki attains a state of madness because of the intense longing to attain Him. She attains the stage of confusion as to mistake things like Him and things attached to Him as He Himself. In 'kaṭal nālam' (5—6) Āḷvār Nāyaki because of the despondency due to his separation imitates as Himself and speaks like Him. This was construed by her mother that she was taken possession of by God (Āvēṣa). In 'Mālukku Vaiyattu' (6—6) Because of the non-availability or non-attainment of Him she becomes bereft of all things. In 'Uṇṇum Cōṟu' (6—7) she deserts even her mother and goes towards the lord. In 'Kaṅkulum Pakalum' (7—2) she attains a state of determination to go to Him and if required to die before Him. The mother feared that her action would be considered as a means to attain Him and so she begins to tell others and God about her real condition and also pleads with God to show His mercy which is the sole cause for her salvation, and 'to allow her to remain in such a state for a long time' is not proper on His part.

In all these seven Tiruvāymoḷis containing 70 verses is expressed the conviction that God is the only means of one's salvation.

The speech of the lady in love — 17 Tiruvāymoḷis:

The lady sends her messengers to her Lord so that he may come quickly and favour her. This is expressed in 4 Tiruvāymoḷis viz., (1—4), (6—1), (6—8) and (9—7). In 'Vāyum Tirai' (2—1) she attains a stage wherein she feels that the nature itself feels desperation like her on account of the separation of its Lord. So she laments along with natural objects. In 'ēṭṭālum Iṭaiyōn' (4—8) she rejects with contempt everything not liked by Him including her life. In 'Mācaṟu Cōti' (5—3) she becomes desperate and begins to say that she would resort to the device of foiled feminine love known in Tamil as Maṭal. In 'Urellām Tuñci' (5—4) she attains a stage wherein she could not overcome the effects of the passion of love and the long weary nights around her. In 'eṇṇānēyō' (5—5) she feels that a perfect image which emerged from the flood of light, entering into her heart equally, while she is in a pleasing manner or in a sorrowful mood.

In 'Mānēy Nōkki' (5—9) she expects eagerly the day on which to join her lover at 'Tiruvallavāl.'

In 'Minniṭai Maṭavār' (6—2) she scorns with love her lover on account of his late coming.

In 'Veḷḷaiccurisaṅku' (7—3) She says that even her heart has gone after her lover and so she has been deserted.

In 'ēḷaiyar āvi (7—7) she suffers by her imaginary vision of her lover's image.

In 'Naṅkaḷ Varivaḷai' (8—2) she defies the orders of her mother and companions who always instruct her about what is good.

In 'innuyirccēval' (9—5) she speaks the state of despondency that she feels when she sees things which remind her of her lover.

In 'Mallikai Kamaḷ Tenṇal' (9—9) the woe and grief felt by her in the evening is expressed.

In 'Vēymaru Tōḷ' (10—3) the despondency felt in the morning on account of the mistaken idea of the separation of her lover 'Kaṇṇan,' is expressed.

Thus in all the 17 Tiruvāymoḷis, the hastening for the attainment of union with her lover is found. So, the statement that the lady's speech represents the state of haste in the attainment of object is proved beyond doubt.

These 27 Tiruvāymoḷis consisting of about 270 verses is the portion where the technique of Tamil love poetry is used by Āḷvār. (These are in the form of expressions by the companion, the mother and the lady in love). In many places one finds the words companion and mother appearing in their plural form. If the knowledge of relationship is referred to as the companion, and the conviction of the upāya or means has been referred to as the mother, a question arises why they should be referred to in the plural. The relation between God and the soul is of various kinds. They are the protector and the protected, the master and the servant, the cause and the effect and the soul and the body etc. So according to the relationship, the companions also become many. God is the Upāya or the means. His qualities are also numberless: *Viz.*, Vātsalyam (motherly affection), Supremacy (Masterliness), Sausīlyam (good nature) and Saulabhyam (easy accessibility to all) etc., With reference to each of the qualities of God, one can form a conviction to have Him as his upāya. So, on account of the plurality of the qualities of God the mothers have also been mentioned as many. There is nothing improper in it.

Similarly with regard to the lady in love, though she is only one individual she has seven stages in her life. They are spoken of in literature as Pētai, Petumpai, Maṅkai, Mātantai, Arivai, Terivai, and pēriḷampē. Like these seven stages, the state of hastening to attain the goal also takes seven stages. They are (1) An interest that arises at the first sight, (2) thinking about the object, (3) meditating upon it, (4) A desire to obtain it, (5) A keen and intensive desire which cannot be satisfied except by tasting or experiencing it, (6) experiencing pleasure in its presence and pain in its separation (para bhakti) and (7) A state when the separation of the object takes away the life (Parama bhakti). The seven stages of a lady can be said to refer to these seven stages mentioned above.

Further, one finds the description of ladies appearing in many places in the verses of Āḷvārs. Parts of their body are also described; the things used ordinarily by them and the playthings used by them

have been described in some places. The description of the various birds they send as messengers and the clouds are found in many a place in the Aruḷicceyal. Our author collects all these references and gives Swabhāvadēsa or inner meaning—suggestive meaning—for them. An attempt is made to explain those ideas in a vivid and precise manner in the following pages on the lines of our author.

Description of the various organs of a lady: (S. 137)

1. Due to the expansive hair on the head, a lady is compared to a pea-cock. This denotes or refers to the expansion of knowledge.
2. On account of the white colour and lustre, the forehead is compared to a new moon. This may be taken to refer to the purity of the soul i.e., not dependent on others except the supreme Being.
3. The eyebrow is compared to a bow on the similarity of its bending quality (curve). This refers to the controlling of the external and internal karaṇas; which is spoken of as 'tānti' in Sanskrit.
4. On account of going straight towards the object of aim, the eye is compared to an arrow. This refers to wisdom or jñāna which aims at perceiving the assigned Lord only.
5. On the basis of producing delight (or ānanda), the smile is spoken of as the pearl. This denotes the delight one gets by the experience of the object (soul). 'mut' in Sanskrit means ānanda.
6. Because of their red colour, the lips are spoken of as gems of corals. This may be taken as referring to the intense desire shown in attaining Him (Rāga-desire, red colour).
7. A breast properly developed will be spoken of as a 'ceppu' -a drinking vessel. This denotes the attainment of bhakti which makes one suitable (fit) for the enjoyment of God.
8. On the basis of slenderness, the waist of a lady is spoken of as the lightning. This refers to the atomic quality of the soul which is the base for the attainment of all knowledge.

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|---|--|
| 9. The part below the abdomen is compared to the chariot. | This shows the quality of enjoyment the Lord gets from the soul or Jīva. |
| 10. The Hamsa bird is compared to ladies due to the similarity in the beauty of their gait. | The soul conducts itself according to its essential nature so that all may eulogise it. This aspect is referred to here. |

Thus it has been explained that the essential nature of jīva is to have the expansion of knowledge, purity and all the other qualities mentioned above. Earlier, the stages that the soul attains were explained. Here the essential nature of soul which was spoken of as 'the state of hastening in the attainment of the final goal' is described. So there is nothing improper in this.

The kind of work and progress accomplished by the three stages viz., the companion, the mother and the lady: (S 138)

The mother says: Many companions took the lady with them and were responsible for her present state and so to whom shall I speak about this? Thus the mother blames the companions.

The companions blame the mother saying that it is she who took the lady to Tulaivilli Maṅkalam—the place of the Lord and cause her the detachment of them.

The lady says to her Lord that her companions made her join them and go over to him in order to play, and so it is only they who are to be blamed for making her like this. She also says to her mothers that it is they who are the cause of her present state. Thus the companions and the mother blaming each other and the lady's endorsement on it (that both of them are to be blamed) is the first stage.

The companion in company with the mothers, condemns the lady with anger saying that she was standing in front of her house etc. She on the other hand helps the lady by advising her mothers to give up the idea about her or to forget her completely. Thus the companion is doing both the condemnation and the encouragement and thereby becomes a companion of both the sides. It is

said in the verse 'Ārennai Ārāyvar'⁹ that both the companions and the mothers were sleeping without disturbing the lady. It is evident from that both of them were in a favourable position to her. These two form the second stage.

The lady deserts both her mothers and her companions, saying that she has no relation or connection with them thenceforth. The companion praises or commends the lady on her intense love for the Lord. The mothers applaud the lady for her devotion to the Lord saying that she walked alone to 'Tirukkōḷūr' which is the Lord's abode. Thus the lady deserting or abandoning both, and both of them commending her on her intensity of love, form the third stage.

In this way the functions of the three stages evolve. In verses which are mother's speech or the lady's speech mention is made about relatives and neighbours or strangers. At the philosophical level what do these expressions mean? ♥

In the stage of the mother - the conviction of the Upāya - the neighbours are those who stand firmly on the path of bhakti which is called Sādhyōpāya. That is opposed to what is explained here - Siddhōpāya - upāya which already exists (*i.e.*, God). The relatives are those who stand firmly in Siddhōpāya - in other words who consider God only as upāya.

In the stage of the lady in love - the hastening in the attainment of the goal - the strangers or enemies are those who profess that they stand firmly in Siddhōpāya and at the same time prevent hastening to reach Him, on the ground that it is opposed to the essential nature of soul, namely being fully dependent on God. The relatives are those who, like herself, stand firm in considering Him as the object to be attained (Sādhyaparar). Many more expressions which can be explained philosophically are dealt with hereunder.

'Nālayalār'¹⁰: The "four neighbours" refers to those who follow the four paths of karma, ñāna, bhakti and prapatti, considering them as Upāyas - or means - to attain the final goal.

9. Tiru. 5-4-5

10. Nacciṃṇar Tirumōḷi 12-12

‘Ayaṛcēriyīrkāl’¹¹: “The people who live in the nearby village” - refers to those who have no enthusiasm or love for the arcā form of God and stand firmly in the indwelling form of God or in the immanent one. In the above line four neighbours are mentioned. The people who live in the three quarters, east, west and north are those who follow karma, jñāna and bhakti as upāyas. These neighbours belong to the external category, whereas in the path of prapatti also there are two divisions. The persons who insist that it is the Jīva that should catch hold of God are said to be internal neighbours or enemies who are closer than others. Here solely depending on the grace of Lord is emphasised by our author. God is the sole upāya for all.

‘Ūrār’¹²: “The people of the village” refers to people who enjoy their soul *i.e.*, who are in the state of self - realisation only. This enjoyment will be like God realisation or mōkṣa and not actually God realisation. Its sphere is restricted. Even for this Jīva has to go to a place away from this world. So it is referred to as a separate village.

‘Nāṭṭār’: “The people of the country” refers to those who are after the (sensual pleasures in this world) or wordly wealth and glory.

‘Ulakar’: “The people of the world” - refers to those who desire the world of empirical pleasures (Svarga) as reward for their good deeds. They are egoists.

‘Ciṛu cuḷaku’: small instrument used to differentiate or divide particles big and small in the sand. This can be taken to refer to the pramāṇa (or means) which helps to differentiate the body from the soul.

‘Cīrcār cuḷaku’: The same tool mentioned above but of a superior quality which may be used to take away sand from the paddy. This refers to the pramāṇa (or the instrument) which helps to attain knowledge about the soul and the Paramātmā or the object of attainment and that which should be abandoned. (All the other gods also will be treated on a par with Jīvas).

11. Tīru. 7-3-2

12. For this and the other words referred after this vide AH. S.S. - 142 to 148.

The evening: The time when things cannot be seen clearly. That makes one confuse one thing with the other. This refers to the rājasic knowledge (active knowledge) which would not help one to understand things in their proper perspective.

The night; The time when nothing can be seen and if seen with effort will give a wrong impression. This refers to the tāmasic knowledge that cannot help one to understand things. Even if it is acquired, it only misleads.

The morning: The time when things appear (in their natural form) clearly. This refers to sāttvic knowledge which helps one to understand the true nature of things.

The day time: Then things will appear very clearly and there will be no cause for doubt or misconception. This refers to the pure unalloyed sāttvic knowledge which helps for the divine vision or to see the true form of God and understand Him and enjoy Him (Sātshātkāra ñāna).

The moon light balcony: From there one can see any thing yonder. Even the Kaṇṇapuram where the Lord resides can be seen from there and shown to others also. This refers to the knowledge of the goal of life.

The garb and the bracelet: These refer to the two egoisms of (attachments of) I and mine. Only after giving up these things the enjoyment of the Lord is possible. In some contexts expressions like the following occur.

“Whether (it will be possible for me to) see Him and pray with folded hands bracelets on.”¹³ In such places we should take them as referring to the I and mine used in the following sense: ‘I live for His purpose’¹⁴ and ‘Tiruvaraṅkar is my Lord.’¹⁵ So in this way the seeming contradiction is reconciled.

Paṭṭam and sūṭakam: These are ornaments worn by ladies on the forehead and on the hands respectively. These refer to

13. Tiru 5-9-9

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¹⁵ AH. S. 147

the ornaments of the soul or Jīva namely the first one to the fame, name and way of prayer attained on account of the initiation of the Ācārya and second to the knowledge of the Jīva that it exists for the purpose of the Lord.

The play ball and the small play-house: These two are places of enjoyment. The ball refers to the body which the soul takes. In olden days the ball which was used to play with, was made by circling three different types of thread. It will rise up and fall down while playing. Likewise the body also has three aspects. It is a playing instrument of the Lord. It has taken its form according to the karma the soul did in its past birth, on account of its subjection to the three guṇa's namely, tāmas, rajas and sātvic. Because of its combination with the soul, like itself it also goes high and falls down and circles like a top.

‘Kaḷal and tūtai’: The first one is a set of articles useful for the game called by that name. They will be five in number. This refers to the five sense organs which are helpful to get sensuous pleasures. The second one is a pot for the preparation of food. This denotes the other instruments which help for enjoyment except the organs mentioned above. Pāvai and Kuḷamaṇaṇ: These are play instruments.

The ‘yāl,’ the ‘tenṇal’ breeze, the moon, the food and the sandal paste: These refer to the five pleasures one derives from hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell, respectively.

‘Pūṇ’ and ‘akil’; the ornament and the pleasant smelling wood: Among the five pleasures mentioned above these refer to two namely sight and smell in addition. These three kinds of things - things of enjoyment, aids of enjoyment and aids for sport, if the Lord considering them as obstacles to his enjoyment releases them then they would be discharged or released. They contain no joy or pleasure worth the name in them. They only help to misdirect the Jīva from its path of God realisation. When one considers them as his own, they become things that are to be abandoned and when they are considered as God's things or belongings they become things which need not be abandoned. When He is not there i.e. while in separation, they seem to be unfavourable and while in union with Him they become favourable. This

can be known to be true on an analysis of all the references in the 'Arulicceyal.'

Explanation of the Symbolic Language used in respect of Ācāryās—Messengers—the Birds:

The Ācāryās hold a very important place in Vaiṣṇava religion and philosophy. They are the persons who help the jīvas to attain God. They are spoken of as various birds in the verses of Ājvārs. To attain God quickly - rise to a high level, nāna and anuṣṭhāna i.e., knowledge about God and performing daily karmas - are indispensable. Both these are spoken of as the two wings of birds.

The birds go from the love intoxicated ladies to their lovers and make them united. So also the Ācāryas help the souls to attain Him. They belong to four categories namely the gurus, the bachelors, and sons and the disciples.

The Hamsa bird (Swan).

The Ācāryas or the gurus.

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| 1. It knows to separate milk from water. | They know the essential and the non-essential. |
| 2. Once God came in the form of hamsa and delivered Dharma śāstras to mankind. | They will teach śāstras to those who listen to them. |
| 3. It would not stay in marshy land. | They would not like to be in śamsāra which is spoken of as 'Vancēṇṇu aḷḷal.' |
| 4. Its style of walking will be like that of ladies. | The style of the bird Hamsa is compared to the style of Sītā Dēvi or Lakshmi (She exists only for the service of the Lord and not for anybody else and serves as mediator (intermediary) between God and His devotees.) The Ācāryas also possess these qualities of Sītā. |

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| <p>5. The bird lives in the lake of Mānasaras on a lotus flower. Green leaves of lotus form an umbrella, the ripe paddy plants do the work of 'moving of Kavari' due to wind. The pure white conches sound like the praise of its victories. The sweet sound of the beetle is heard.</p> | <p>The lotus leaf-like body of Krishna serves them as a protector from the heat of the worldly sorrows. The fully blossomed nānis do service to them. Persons with pure qualities eulogise them. Their disciples who know the essence only sing sweet Sāma gāna. They live in the lotus hearts of their disciples.</p> |
| <p>6. It lives with its family and experiences no sorrows. With a feeling of continuous delight along with all its relatives the Hamsa bird leads a good life.</p> | <p>They lead their lives according to the rules of the śāstras, without any kind of worldly sorrows and enjoying uninterrupted joy which increases day by day. They live with their wives and children and enjoy God experience also.</p> |

These are persons like Selva Nampi, Periyālvār and others. Further Sri Nāthamuni and Āḷavantār who had detached themselves from this world (who followed the path of renunciation) were also said to belong to this category.¹⁶

The beetle and the dragon fly: (S. 152)

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| <p>1. It will go to flowers and drink the honey.</p> | <p>These persons would not show any interest in things alien to them (This is a difference).</p> |
| <p>2. It will not wish to drink anything except honey and on that account it will be called by the name Madhuvrada.</p> | <p>These people have dedicated themselves to enjoy the Lord who resides in the melting hearts of devotees, in the form of honey.</p> |
| <p>3. It will have a pure and sweet voice due to the drinking of honey.</p> | <p>Because of their God experience they will speak pure and sweet words.</p> |

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| 4. It will drink the essence of the Vahula flower which adorns the hair. | These persons will enjoy the essence in the verses of Ālṅvār who wears a garland of Vahula flowers. |
| 5. On account of the drinking of honey it will sing with joy and be circling over the head. | On account of the overflow of joy experienced with God and His servants, they will sing sweet music. |
| 6. It will sing the various tunes or 'Rāgas' appropriate for the times. | All through day and night they will contemplate over the qualities of God and sing many sweet tunes (in a unique way). |
| 7. Even in a thickly crowded place where nobody can enter, the beetle will enter without any interruption. | The places where even the Dēvas — gods - find difficult to enter, these people will enter easily as if they have got a right. |
| 8. It will go and sit on the hair of ladies without any hesitation, on account of the similarity of colour. | They will go without any hesitation and stand by the side of God and His devotees. |
| 9. It will go from the lady to the lover and express her intense desire and love for him. It will return before his arrival and enjoy the pleasure the lady experiences on its arrival. It will disclose the enjoyment it got there in her lover's place and thereby console her. | The ācāryas will do the same thing in respect of the soul and God. |
| 10. The beetle which sucks honey from the flowers will be cited as witness for the union of the hero and the heroine. | God will accept the jīvas for the sake of the Vaiṣṇavites who know the essence of vedas (the tiru-mantra). |

The Lord will be spoken of as a divine beetle. The revered people Nāratar, Tiruppāṇālvār, Araiyaṛs and such others who help the souls to attain God are spoken of as beetles (Vaṇṭus and Tumpies) on the similarities seen in their qualities and actions.

The parrot and 'pūvai': (S. 153)

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| 1. The parrot will be trapped in a net. | The ācāryas will not fall in the trap of ladies' eyes and will be caught in the net of the lotus eyes of God. |
| 2. It will sit on the hands of the person who rears it or brings it up. | They will be beloveds or friendly to their ācāryas who bring them up with love. |
| 3. It will drink the curd, ghee, milk, and ambrosia given by its master or mistress. | They will enjoy the qualities of God which are Tāraka, Pōshaka, Bhōgya (food, drink and delight) to them through the instructions or upadēsas of their ācāryas given according to their attainments and also the times. |
| 4. The parrot will repeat what is said to it. | They will speak the same ideas in the same manner as their ācāryas. |
| 5. It will be pleased with its master's voice in whatever disposition he may speak—whether it is a request made earnestly or in a regretful mood or a condemnation. | They will take with delight whatever their ācāryas say whether it be in their support or pleasing or harsh. |
| 6. The parrot is unable to repeat what is said to it and so, on further request it sings what is taught earlier, even then its master feels, proud of bringing it up and hails it. | They are capable of singing in such a way as to be extolled by their ācāryas. |
| 7. Peacock will dance and cry with joy. | They will dance in 'ecstasy repeating the name of God 'Araṅka.' |
| 8. Cuckoo will live or grow in the nests of other birds. | They will grow by their devotion to their ācāryas and God's servants. |

Persons like Maturakavi, the first disciple of the Āḷvār, Toṇṭar aṭippoṭi Āḷvār, and the close disciples who were devoted to Sri Rāmānuja viz., Āḷvān, Āṇṭān, empār, ‘Aruḷāḷapperumāḷ emperumānār and others possess the qualities enunciated above and so they are referred to as parrot, ‘pūvai’, cuckoo and peacock.

‘Nārai,’ ‘Kokku’ and ‘Kuruku’ :—Crane-stork

1. The kuruku possesses spotless white feathers (or wings). They possess internal and external purity.
2. The storks will not be afraid of the waves. On account of fixing their minds firmly on God, they will be dauntless of the waves of the ocean of births.
3. The stork will feed its little one bringing a small bit of food which will be suited to its small mouth. They will help their disciples with ideas on God learnt from the śāstras and which are suitable for them.
4. The kurukus will graze in flocks in the park fields daily. They will go of their own accord to places where discourses on God are delivered and enjoy the qualities of God along with their disciples who cannot be isolated from them.
5. ‘Oh’ stork, you place your feet on my head,’ and in gratitude for that, ‘I will donate all the green parks to you to have them as your own’; such expressions from the lady in love are found in ‘Aruḷicceyal.’ These people will be borne by their disciples on their head and shoulders on account of gratitude. Those disciples will give their all-including body, wealth and life to these ācāryas.

Kulasēkara Āḷvār who was ready to give away even his kingdom in order to enjoy the company of God’s servants and God at Sriraṅgam and the ācārya Nammūtālīkaḷ and such others are referred to as the stork and kuruku here.

The cloud: (S. 155)

1. In the rainy season the cloud will go to the sea and drink water. Daily these people will go to the ocean (sea) where the God Tirumāl is lying in a conscious sleep and there they will enjoy in their mind the endless qualities of God.
2. The cloud is dark in colour like the body of God - Tirumāl. These persons also appear like their God in their colour (body).
3. The cloud in order to protect the living beings through its pouring of rain, will wander all over the sky. In order to protect the living beings by showing them a good path these persons will roam about the world.
4. The tanks and ponds will be filled in completely or wholly by the pouring of rain by the cloud. The pond of nāna will be filled with the water of good qualities of the Lord poured by these persons.
5. On account of the rain, the whole country will get good life, without any distress or evil and also the wealth of pearls will grow. In order to live a good life without any evils they will convey to all, the good qualities of God which are like pearls.
6. It will blush on thinking of its inadequacy of pouring. Though they are always preaching good things they will think about its inadequacy and feel shy of being not able to do more.
7. When they are not in a position to help, their body will become pale and they will hide themselves. When they cannot help, their face will turn pale and they will go under ground.
8. After the rains if the plants and other beings appear to have grown fully, the clouds will feel happy and proud thinking that fertility is their own attainment. While giving, the joy of the receiver makes them delighted.

On the basis of the similarity of these qualities the first three Ālvārs, noted for their devotion to God, Tirumaḷicai, who established or fought for the supremacy of God Viṣṇu, Tirumaṅkai, who was a cloud that poured grace and Emperumānār who had all the qualities of a cloud are spoken of as the cloud.

CHAPTER VI

THE PHILOSOPHY OF NAMMĀLVĀR IN THE LIGHT OF ĀCĀRYA HṚDAYAM.

Part I.

THE PATH OF ĀLVĀR AND THE OTHER PATHS.

The first chapter of the great work Ācārya Hṛdayam, opens with an exposition of the philosophy of Nammālvār. It is also influenced by the teachings of Sri Rāmānuja who appreciated the philosophy of Nammālvār and was influenced by it. Even the later chapters give clear and pointed references to the philosophy of the saint. His philosophy is not dissimilar to the teachings of the vedas and the Upaniṣads. Passages which are felt to be vague or obscure in those works are explained in the light of the verses of Nammālvār. Sri Rāmānuja in his exposition of his own philosophy in his main works Śrībhāṣya and commentary on Bhagavadgītā relies greatly on the works of Nammālvār. Rāmānuja accepts the smritis, purāṇas and Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata as authoritative works or pramāṇas. But the verses of Ālvār are more authoritative than any statement in the Smritis etc. It is evidenced by the fact that the veracity of any statement is judged by an appeal to the verses of Nammālvār which are taken as the supreme pramāṇa.¹

The exposition of the philosophical ideas in the Ācārya Hṛdayam introduces the most important concept, the concept of God and also that of the living beings. This is done in the first sūṛṇai itself. God is most merciful. Human beings are in avidyā (or ignorance.) The Nitya sūris (a class of souls eternally free from saṁsāra) have both the privilege as well as the actual experience of enjoying divine presence and grace; but the other beings, though possessing the same privilege are denied the rightful enjoyment because of their ignorance. The all merciful God, far from aban-

1. AH. SS. 64 to 66

doning the helpless and ignorant has given them the means or the instruments necessary to attain His lotus feet. He has given them the body and the senses so as to serve God and realise Him. He has also endowed them with (expansion of) knowledge and power to follow either the path of pravṛtti (active life) or the path of Nivṛtti (quietism). He has given the vedas and sāstras to enlighten the path of discernment *i.e.*, to be able to distinguish the temporal from the eternal.

The animate beings are connected with the non-sentience (acit). This relation is beginningless and endless (anādi). This urges them to express themselves in deeds virtuous and vicious. It is because of these actions they are born into this world of darkness or ignorance. They are possessed of rājasīc and tāmasīc qualities. These have been in the way of the acquisition of knowledge of the five things (Artha pañchakam) every seeker after salvation ought to know: namely Brahman, Soul, means of realisation, the goal of life and obstacles to the achievement of it. Thus the absence of this knowledge that has subjected the living beings to samsāra *i.e.*, the cycle of births and deaths. One should know that this attachment to samsāra is the way of distress and it has to be given up.

All living beings bear an intimate attachment to Brahman or God. This relation is not merely a temporal one. It is coeval with time and beyond it. It may be described as eternal. The heart of God is 'ever responsive to the joys and sorrows of His living creatures' (Sowhārdam). He is merciful to them. The grace of God and His ever watchful eyes cast a halo on them. It leads them to acquisition of a sātvic character. This cultivation of satva leads them to true knowledge. It is the knowledge of five essentials of a good life namely artha pañchaka jñāna. This again leads to the achievement of mōksha or salvation. One should know this is the only thing to be assiduously cultivated and realised in life.

The relation of the human individual to acit leads him to forget his true nature. He is dominated by acit and this causes his degeneration, just as a kiṭṭam (rust) which makes a precious stone lose its shining and become an ordinary stone. On the other hand the individual's relation with God is of a reverse character. God is interested in the minutest of the living creatures.

He is ever watchful and bestows on them the divinity that is Himself. He lifts them above themselves to His own level through knowledge and bliss. It is in this way that knowledge becomes life. This is compared to the action of a Vēṭṭuvēlān (an insect) which brings a larva to its own habitation and by stinging it often makes it an insect like itself. The relation with the non-sentience (acit) for soul is not natural. It has joined it on a later date. That is evident from.

‘பெரும் துயர் இடும்பையில் பிறந்து கூடினேன்’²

I was born in a world of pain and suffering and became accustomed to it and gradually accepted it. This relationship will vanish without any trace of its existence if the omnipotent God wills it. The other relationship cannot be annuled even if all the persons including God Himself try individually or together.³ So it is the real eternal relationship. It is said to be like the attachment between a mother and her child. Earlier the relation with non-sentience was treated as eternal, because, its origin is rooted in the obscurity of the ancient past.

This relationship between God and Jīva is the cause for His delivering vedas to the benefit of mankind. Nārāyaṇa is the name of the Supreme Being. The word has two meanings. (1) Resting place of all the sentient beings and non-sentient things. (2) One who dwells in all the sentient beings and non-sentient things. These two aspects are respectively expressed by Āḷvār in the following passage.

‘‘தன்னுள் அனைத் துலகும் நிற்க

நெறிமையால் தானும் அவற்றுள் நிற்கும் பிரான்’’⁴

The aspect mentioned secondly is described by Rāmānuja as Sarīra-śarīri bhāva. This is a special feature in Viśiṣṭādvaita. The expressions ‘kuṭaltuṭakku’ and ‘utarattarippu’ used in Ācārya Hṛdayam⁵ to denote the relation between the Lord and the Jīva point to the first aspect mentioned above. These mean connections as intimate as between a mother and her child. The Lord is the source of

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2. Periya Tiru 1-1-1
 3. Tiruppāvai – 28
 4. Tiru 9-6-4
 5. AH. S. 13

all the beings and worlds. If he has given the vedas for mankind because of this relation, a question arises why has he given śāstras which make persons attached to worldly pleasures, instead of exclusively giving śāstras which help for God realisation. The answer for that is that He has done that because of His enormous grace or Vātsalya. A beloved mother because of her love for her child allows it to eat mud which is harmful. Preventing it in the beginning, she feels, will hurt the child's enthusiasm. So later on she gives another medicine to cure it from the after-effects of mud-eating. Likewise the Almighty being more concerned than the worldly mother allows them to have attachments according to their tastes and at the same time indicates to them the remedies to free themselves from attachments. This is done to free them from bondage in the proper order. To ordinary people mere revelation of the śāstras which will cause liberation from bondage will not enable them to evince an absorbing interest in them. They will go after money and for that reason even be ready to do harm to others. He wants to catch them also in his net (God wants to make them fall in His trap). So he has given them rules which will attract them. In doing Apisāra Karma one has to kill certain living beings. If it is done one can attain some material advantages. By giving such rules He makes worldly minded people acquire some sort of faith in the śāstras. Then they are told about the means for attaining Svarga and such other lōkas. Through that they come to learn about the Prakriti and Soul. Afterwards they are shown the way for the experience of the bliss by the soul. Then soul is made free. In that stage soul is shown the unique enjoyment of God and the bhakti way which is the means to attain that. It realises it is not independent. Its true nature is to be useful to the Lord or Īśvara. It tries in various ways to reach Him. It feels difficulty in doing the ordered rituals. In that stage it is being told about the only best way which is the easiest one *i.e.*, it should give away all its efforts and with complete faith do saraṇāgati at His feet. It is called the prapatti. He attains the stage of pāratantriyam *i.e.*, depending for all things on Him, as if losing all his self (independence). It is the true nature of soul or Jīva. The Lord has given the Bhandaka sastras also, only for this reason-leading the souls to realisation stage by stage.⁶

Reading and understanding the vedas require some essential qualifications. He saw people were struggling hard in this respect. To make them feel easy he has devised another easier method also. The essence of vedas is said to be the upaniṣads. Their essence is said to be 'Nārāyaṇa anuvāka.' In turn its finest essence is 'Gāyatri Mantra.' In it, the first mentioned mantra is 'Nārāyaṇa.' This is the gist of vedas'. 'மாதவன் பேர் சொல்லுவதே ஒத்தின் கருக்கு'. To protect those who dread the cycle of birth and death, the Lord has given this mantra, a condensed form of the vedas. Just as a bee sucks honey from various flowers, and the Hamsa bird (swan) separates the milk from milk diluted with water and the Lord himself once took the nectar by churning the milk ocean, He has taken from vedas this pure essence which is like honey, milk and nectar. This He did by sheer divine grace. Below is shown clearly the difference between these two ways - The path of Sāstras and the path of Tirumantra.

People who follow śāstras.

People who follow Tirumantra.

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| 1. The śāstras have been given to the world through the rishis. | God has given the Mantra directly. |
| 2. They consider the bodily differences of people. | It considers the soul alone as its aim. |
| 3. Only those with unblemished qualities are qualified to read and follow the principles enunciated in the Sāstras. | Faith is the only necessary qualification to follow this method. |
| 4. Those who are learned in the Sāstras are like people who try to cross the ocean by swimming with their effort having a float for their help. | The śāragñars (who know the essence of vedas, the Tirumantra) are like people who are sitting quietly on the central rod of a boat and contemplating when they will reach the shore. |
| 5. This is due to their knowledge about the nature of to soul. | This is due to their knowledge about the nature of soul. |

*People who follow śāstras.**People who follow Tirumantra.*

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| <p>6 They hold that soul is different from the body and its nature is to learn and to do work and to enjoy its effects.</p> <p>7. This knowledge induces them to follow a means to attain Him.</p> <p>8. They will do karma (rituals) according to their caste which is not real and permanent.</p> <p>9. The commands of the vedas induce them to do Karma.</p> <p>10. They will worship God with various other means. (They are called upāsakas)</p> <p>11. Their object of worship is many Gods, in whom the Almighty reposes Himself as Antaryāmi. They think that they can reach Him through them. They know He is the only God who is responsible for the fruits they enjoy</p> <p>12. These various forms are called general. The Karma done for them is also called the general.</p> | <p>They hold that all the things in this world are mortals. The Lord makes them understand this and so they learn pāratantrya and bhōkyata as the real nature of soul.</p> <p>They keep quiet, thinking that it is for the Lord who enjoys the object-soul-to try to get it.</p> <p>They will do 'Kaiṅkarya.' It will be according to their non-independent nature. This nature is real and permanent.</p> <p>The ardent desire in the enjoyment of the Lord induces them to do Kaiṅkarya (selfless service to God).</p> <p>They will be attracted by the images found in various temples. They will do Kaiṅkarya only. That is the means and end for them. (They are called prapannās).</p> <p>The object for these people is the image wherein He is residing, descending from his superior abode on account of his grace and mercy.</p> <p>The form with divine grace is a special one. Kaiṅkarya done for it is named special. These people who do Kaiṅkarya need not do karma.</p> |
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*People who follow śāstras.**People who follow Tirumantra.*

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| <p>13. Karma is the first step in the means. These people are named Varṇa Dharma because of the karma they do according to their varṇas or castes.</p> | <p>Kainkarya is the final stage in the upēya (attainment). These are named Dāsa Viruttins on the basis of their Dāsa quality or serviceable attitude.</p> |
| <p>14. These people take a new birth by initiation into Gāyatri by the learned brāhmins.</p> | <p>These people are initiated by Ācāryas who have learnt the Tirumantra which is the mother of Gāyatri and is superior to the mother also in doing good.</p> |
| <p>15. These are called 'Antaṇar and Maṇaiyōr. This refers to their caste and their faith in vedas.</p> | <p>These are called Aṭiyār and Toṇṭar. This refers to the intrinsic nature of the soul.</p> |
| <p>16. They are named after their race and castes.</p> | <p>They are named after the relationship with God and God's servants.</p> |
| <p>17. These people are brāhmins and their leaders are Parāsara, Pārāsara and Bōtāyana in respect of their gōtram, saraṇam and sūtram.</p> | <p>These are called prapannas, and their leaders are Parāṅkusa, Parakāla and Yathirāja.</p> |
| <p>18. Their greatness is in reciting vedas, understanding them and practising them in life. They attain brahminism by this.</p> | <p>Their greatness is in learning understanding and living upto the tenets expounded in Tiruvāymoḷi which is the veda in Tamil. They attain Sri Vaiṣṇavism by this.</p> |

Thus the author outlines two different paths which lead to realisation. One is called the way of those learned in Śāstras. The other is the way of people who know the essence of the Vedas. The first set of people follow the path of karma, jñāna, and bhakti as a sādhana (means). This is restricted to a few high class

people only. This requires some qualifications for its followers. The second set of people follow the path of prapatti. This is universal. It is an easy way.

By contrasting the two ways, it is obvious that the author suggests that the second series is the best. If the Lord is Parama Kāruṇika (all merciful) then his grace should be showered on all equally. The Sanskrit vedas are prohibited things for the ladies and people who are born in the fourth varṇa. The second method is expounded by Āḷvār, and it is a universal one. The first set of people rely for everything on the vedas. The second set rely on Tiruvāymoḷi. Can this be said to be on an equal footing with the vedas which were given by the Lord Himself? The answer for this question is in the affirmative. The author goes on to prove that the Tiruvāymoḷi is also a Veda and it has all the requisite qualities. That in certain respects it is superior to the sanskrit vedas, seems to be the opinion of the author.

By reciting the vedas one gets brāhmanism. By reciting Tiruvāymoḷi one attains vaiṣṇavism. “If one does not understand the inner meaning of this Tiruvāymoḷi even if he has attained the brāhmanism by learning all the vedas, he will lose vaiṣṇavism and thereby loses his brāhmanism also. People will doubt even his birth.⁸” By saying this the author emphasises that, it is God realisation that is more important and not the learning of the vedas. That state can be attained more easily through Tiruvāymoḷi, than through anything else. So he holds Tiruvāymoḷi superior to anything else in the world. He explains elaborately his point in this respect.*

The gracious look of the Lord is the cause of the superiority and glory of Āḷvār.⁹ In the purāṇas and in the Itihāsas we find many incidents which show the grand effect of the Lord's gracious look. Because of the grace of Rāmachandra the avatāra of the Lord, the old hunter woman was able to relinquish all her sins and was able to attain mōkṣa. Again it was due to the grace of the lotus eyed Kaṇṇapirān, the other avatāra of the Lord, that

Viṭura who was a low born character in the Mahābhārata, became devoid of sins. Kāṇṇapīrān went as a guest to the House of Viṭura while he went as a messenger on behalf of the pāṇṭavās to the king Duriyōthana, in preference to all the other great men and respected people like Bhīṣma, Drōṇa and a host of others who were on the side of Duriyōthana. His gracious look on another occasion made the wives of ascetics in Bhaktavilōcana fit for mōksha then and there.¹⁰

These instances make it clear that the gracious look of the Lord, if it fell on a person destroys the big burden of his sins, the effect of which cannot be dissolved even by the soul living many lives.¹¹ He made the Brindāvan - the forest of thorns into a green field of grass for the benefit of the cows.¹² Likewise for the benefit of the world He made Āḷvār into a person of His status of knowledge and energy, making all his grace flow into one stream. Āḷvār himself mentions it in one of his verses.

“எதிர் குழல்புக்கு எனத்தோர் பிறப்பும் எனக்கே

அருள்கள் செய்ய

விதி குழந்த தால் எனக்கேல் எம்மான் திரிவிசிரமையே”¹³.

The effect of it was the Āḷvār became capable of making the people of all the villages, the nation and the world like himself love the Lord and praise His name and everything that belongs to Him.¹⁴ The grace that the Lord showed on Āḷvār was able to dispel his ignorance completely and give him Bhakti in the form of jñāna (or wisdom).¹⁵

The Bhakti which Āḷvār experienced was of a special kind. It was neither sādhanā bhakti nor sādhyabhakti which are spoken of in the śāstras. The uniqueness of it is described in sūṇai No. (AH. 101). The grace of the Lord enables the bhaktas to have

10. AH. S. 95

11. Tiruppāvai - 22.

12. AH. S. 96

13. Tiru - 2-7-6

14. Tiru. 6-7-2

15. AH. S. 97

the realisation of bliss. It is showered on them though they may not deserve it. That is why it is called grace. The author explains, neither the karma, *nāna* or *bhakti* performed in this life nor those *sādhana*s performed during earlier births is the cause of getting the Lord's mercy. On account of the efforts of the Lord only *Ālvar* got the unique *bhakti* or *nāna* and this is explained in an allegorical way in terms of the paddy field, the cultivator, the crop and the yield.¹⁶

It is said the Lord bestows his blessings even though the person blessed may not have done any thing to deserve it. Whether he does so is the question raised by many. It is mentioned in *Rāmāyaṇa* that all the living beings (*sarāsara* - sentient beings and non-sentient things) without any deserving quality on their part attained good life or Salvation simply because of the connection they had with Sri Rāma, the *avatāra* of God. *Sāstras* say that when Sri Krishna played on the flute at Gokulam all the sentient and non-sentient beings reacted to it. They enjoyed it very much. Those who saw the sight admired it very much.¹⁷ So it can be taken for granted that without cause it is showered on beings and it works wonders. If it is so, there arises a question why it is not showered on all alike? or why He is partial for a few? The author answers in the following way:

‘பட்டத்துக்குரிய ஆனையும் அரசும் செய்யுமவை ஆராயாது’¹⁸.

In a country where there is chaos, the man selected by the royal elephant, sent with its eyes tied, will become the king. One should not put a question why the elephant has selected that particular man leaving others aside. Similarly if the king on account of his majesty selects a lady as his queen, one should not ask why he has selected that particular lady leaving many others who are like her. So also the Lord who is wholly independent selects anyone among His men who are wholly dependent on Him and purely on Him only, as fit for his blessings. We have no right to question that. Rather we should leave it as a matter which cannot be discussed. We seem to have reached an ultimate here.

16. AH. S. 194

17. AH. S. 105

18. AH. S. 106

We may accept the sovereignty of the Lord. But is it not a blemish of partiality on the part of God to show grace only to a few? 'No' is the answer to it. He blesses a person who does prapatti to Him. That is only those who recognise Him and have complete faith in Him, are blessed by Him. It is like a father showing mercy to his sons who are completely dependent on him. He expects nothing for protecting them except their faith in him. If the Lord lays down conditions for his action then it becomes unworthy of Him. Further one cannot give anything as reward to God for his grace towards him. Even without asking He grants what one deserves. If a son or a daughter asks the father for a proper thing there is no wonder he gives it. Further what one performs as upāya is not in any way equal to what is given by God. At times - why on all occasions - it will be better to approach the father through the mother instead of directly. Then the request is met with success easily. Similarly Pirāṭṭi (Sītā Dēvi) the consort of Lord Nārāyaṇa is considered to be the 'Prusohāra' or the intermediary in Vaiṣṇava Philosophy.

The place of Āḷvār is entirely different in the Vaiṣṇava hierarchy of Ācāryas. Hē was blessed with bhakti in the form of āṇa. Then he did prapatti at the feet of the Lord. "I, your servant who has no other refuge, have entered at your feet willingly."¹⁹ Then he was asked to sing Tiruvāymoḷi and afterwards he was blessed with bliss.

His bhakti or devotion is described in the following lines. It was born along with him just like the scent of thulsi leaf. Even if he wanted to abandon, it was impossible for him to do so. As one feels hungry when one does not get food, Āḷvār, when he does not experience the Divine, becomes grief stricken and unhappy. In the thirst for enjoyment even the soul which is immune to dryness becomes dried in the tender state. It makes him experience the state which he calls 'Alamarutal' to see the blissful Lord. Though he was persistent in rejecting all the other means to attain Him except through Him, He was forced to adopt 'Maṭalūrtal' which was considered as unbecoming of a lady. Prapatti should be done only once. But in his case his desire made him do prapatti often, thereby making him deviate from the right path on which

he was expected to stand firmly. In this way his piety was responsible for his existence, for the enjoyment or experience of the Lord and doing service for Him.²⁰

As upāya he did not do anything. It is clearly explained in sūṛṇais 107 to 113. There were no virtues which he practised either consciously or unconsciously. If he had done any good deeds he would have certainly mentioned them in his verses. His good deeds were not even the cause for the purification of his mind or to create a desire in his mind to bow to the Lord. Even for this the Lord's grace was the cause and not Āḷvār's puṇya or virtue. One of the Lord's qualities is to come to the help of those who think about him - or rather those who count the number twenty six. In the 26 Tattvas - realities - God stands as the 26th tattva, If one utters 26, the Lord takes it as a reference to Himself and bestows His blessings on him. In the case of Āḷvār he did not do even that. He never permitted God even to stay in his heart - or He did not even accept to have his heart as His abode. Nor was there any combined effort or unity between him and his mind or heart. For these two also the Lord was the cause. This happened by His effort only.

Āḷvār uttered the words 'Mātavan' and 'Tirumālirumcōlai' respectively to denote or distinguish one person from another person and to differentiate one hill from another hill. But the Lord taking it as mentioning his name and the name of his dwelling place, entered into the heart of Āḷvār. Likewise a few other acts of Āḷvār were also taken as referring to Himself and He blessed Āḷvār for it. Even these acts on the part of Āḷvār could not be taken as causes to get God's blessings. Because these acts were done, (1) to distinguish objects, (2) with the intention of getting something else, (3) done unconsciously, (4) not dictated by the Vedas, (5) not equal in any way to the fruit of mōksha. They might be causes for small benefits. So these acts on the part of Āḷvār cannot be taken as justifications for getting the bliss of enjoying the Lord.

The unlimited grace of God is depicted through an imaginary conversation between God and Āḷvār. Without any reason God

came to the Āḷvār and said to him that he was His servant or disciple. Āḷvār demanded proof. God cited the vedas as his authority. Āḷvār argued that the Vedas are coming from one generation to another orally only. It is only the written document that can be accepted as proper evidence. God, thinking that enjoying a thing for a very long period is a stronger proof than any other evidence suggested that as basis for his statement. Āḷvār demanded witness for that also, and so God cited the learned rishis as his witnesses. Āḷvār rejected that on the ground that those learned ṛishis are related persons to Him and so their words are prejudiced ones.

At that stage the Lord showed his beautiful body (image) and lovable qualities which were a feast to the eyes and ears and as if done by magic, made him feel that he is Lord's servant and to express really he had robbed the soul from Him by force and was having it as his own all these days. This act He did because of his overwhelming grace which encircled Him. Āḷvār also speaks elsewhere as follows:

“ வரவாறென்றில்லையால் வாழ்வினிதால் ”²¹

“ வெறிதே அருள் செய்வார் செய்வார்கட்கு ”²²

This means(I) I could not see the reason why the grace of God came on me. Yet I feel the life is very happy and joyful (2) The Lord blesses people to whom he wants to give His bliss, without any reason or cause. From these statements it is obvious that the Lord who is the first cause of all beings is the cause also of their God realisation.

Because of this quality he has taken many avatāras. He descended from his high state in order to help people who were in distress to attain their goal. This aspect is spoken of as His Saulabya (easily accessible to all). This only makes Āḷvār melt like wax before fire and admire Him.

The Lord took birth on his own free will as Fish, Tortoise Boar Narasiṅka, the Dwarf, three Rāmas and Kaṇṇan and in so many other forms. As Kaṇṇan he was born in the Yātava caste

21. Periya - A. 56

22. Tiru. 8-7-8

which was considered at that time as a low one. To bring the earth to its state which was sunk in the deluge He came as a varāha (Boar). Likewise, He took birth as Ālvār in the 4th varṇa which was considered not a superior one, in order to show to the world that the ego of high birth should not be entertained.

The supreme being has five forms. They are: (1) The supreme form (2) Vyūha form (3) Vibhava (avatāra like Rāma and Kṛishṇa) (4) Antaryāmin (dwelling inside all) and (5) Arcā (images worshipped in temples). The being is only one. But it takes five forms. A king will be on his throne during day time surrounded by his paraphernalia (servants and advisers). During night, to know the state of affairs personally, he will go round his city incognito, so that no one might recognise him. That is called checking the city. He will conduct consultations with his advisers what should be done to protect the good and punish the culprits in his country. He will go on hunting to kill the wild beasts which trouble the people. To relax himself he will go to parks with his ladies and enjoy life there. Thus a king will conduct himself and do justice to his subjects. In the same way that the younger king (prince) of the heavens who is the Lord of the two vibhūtis (Nitya vibhūti and Līlā vibhūti) will also conduct Himself. These five stages can be equated with the five forms mentioned earlier. His stay with his consort Lakshmi in paramapada can be compared to the king's stay on his throne. His antaryāmin state (dwelling in all the things without even they knowing his existence) can be compared to the king's night check. His stay in the Milk-ocean on Anantan and contemplating of ways and means of protecting His followers can be compared to king's consultations with his advisers. His coming on the earth in order to destroy evil and help the good, can be compared to the king's hunting of wild beasts. His stay on the hills like Tiruvēṅkaṭam and temples which are surrounded by forests can be spoken of as king's spending his leisure and enjoying nature. All these five stages are mentioned in one single verse of Nammālvār.²³

“ விண்மீ திருப்பாய்! மலைமேல் திற்பாய்! கடல் சேர்ப்பாய்!
மண்மீ துழல்வாய்! இவற்றுள்ளெங்கும் மறைந்துறைவாய்! ”

It is to be borne in mind that these five are five forms and the real being is only one and not five. The Arcā forms *i.e.*, the images worshipped in temples, contain in abundance all the other qualities of the other forms like Paratva etc. Avatāra was only for a certain period. People born after that period cannot enjoy or benefit by the Avatāra. But the Arcā form can be enjoyed and worshipped by all who come even later.²⁴ The places which contain such temples are called Divya Dēsas or places of divinity. There are many such places. Each place has a certain particular quality or characteristic of the Lord which shines more prominently than others, and that is explained in detail in sūṛṇais 159 to 186 in an interesting manner.

We find Āḷvār often advising other people. Even in the first stanza of his first work 'Tiruviruttam' he requests the Lord to halt and listen to his request. He says that they should be relieved of the false knowledge etc. Here we find that he is making requests not for himself alone but for all his followers and those who are around him. The commentator of the verse, Periyavāccāṇ piḷḷai points here that because of his pity for the sufferings of others, he is arguing on behalf of others. In the main work Tiruvāymoḷi also we find beginning from the second Tiruvāymoḷi in the first Ten, each Ten containing one or more Tiruvāymoḷis in the form of advice to others. One may ask whether Āḷvār has attained all that he could attain before he begins to advise others. The main reason for his advising others often is his pity for their suffering, his knowledge about the relationship they have with God and his extreme tender heartedness. Āḷvār's advice is meant not only for the worldly people but also occasionally to God. When he is in his good senses (pure knowledge) he wants to turn all the people to enjoy the Lord like himself. For that reason he tries to advise people who go after money which is not real, to cultivate bhakti towards God, who alone is the real. God is omnipotent, yet Āḷvār advises Him saying that he would tell Him one important thing.²⁵ This he does because of this excess of love for the Lord. We find love making him blind.

People who are subjected to karmas and who therefore do not know the means or the end, are in a state of perplexity. For

24. AH. S. 158

25. Tiru. 6-2-5

them Āḷvār gives his advice regarding what one should know and what one should give up. This we find from the beginning 'வீடுமின் முற்றவும்'²⁶ to the end, 'சுனைநன் மலரிட்டு நினைமின்.'²⁷ The Lord is influenced by love. So He is also in a state of confusion. He doubts whether Āḷvār will go away from him thinking about his inferiority. At that stage Āḷvār speaks to the Lord that he has held Him firmly and after reaching Him he (Āḷvār) would not leave Him away. He even begins to tell the Lord which is the means and which is the goal and advises Him to give up all wrong things and to do good things and in this manner instructs Him. We find the Lord is spoken of as Āḷvār's disciple. All the required qualities of a good disciple are abundantly found in the Lord and this is described in A.H.S. 202.

Though Āḷvār is instructing others, he is experiencing God realisation continuously without any break. In him he is experiencing God, but outwardly he is instructing others also. The verses in which he offers advice to the people are the important parts in Tiruvāymoḷi. They are contained in Tiruvāymoḷis 1-2, 2-10, 3-9, 4-10, 5-2, 6-3, 7-10, 8-6, 9-10 and 10-5.

'Payilum cuṭaroli,' 'Neṭumārkaṭimai' are two patikams (Tiruvāymoḷis) that speak about the servants of God. Without this all the other verses which are sung in praise of God would not be complete. So it is obvious that these are important ones.²⁸ The bhakti for God is the first step. The bhakti shown towards His disciples (servants) is the final or last step in the process. That stage is spoken of as spotless serviceability in Tiruvāymoḷi. This shows how the human aspect is respected in the Vaiṣṇava philosophy.

26. Tiru. 1-2

27. Ibid. 10-5

28. A.H. S. 217

PART II

THE QUALITIES OF THE LORD AND THE SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT AND PREACHING OF ĀLVĀR.

1 *The qualities of Īṣvara*

In Tiruvāymoḷi in each group of Ten consisting of hundred verses, one particular aspect of Īṣvara's innumerable auspicious qualities, is emphasised.

The first Ten primarily speaks about the "Paratva" (the supreme aspect) of Īṣvara. In the second Ten it is expressed that Īṣvara constitutes Himself as the three kinds of causes of all the cit and acit (sentient beings and non-sentient things) in this world. This actually reveals His supremacy. Though He is immanent in all the objects, He is not affected by the defects of those things. His spreading all over the world is not like the spreading of the sky. He controls all the things in His two worlds by His commands. Though He is the supreme ruler, He possesses unlimited grace, so that nobody need harbour any fear in his heart to approach Him. (He is Parama Kāruṇika). He stands as a refuge to all those who surrender themselves at His feet. His blessings are for all. The help that He gives to his devotees is made available to His enemies also. He is so powerful as to accomplish that. He has a consort and other attendants who are real and eternally free. On that account He is called 'Satyakāman' that is one who enjoys real objects. Even that superiority does not make Him forget His World. At the time of the dissolution of the universe, without expecting any reward, He of his own accord protects the objects from dangers. So He is called Āpat-raksaka - one who protects at the time of perils. For that purpose He manifests Himself in various forms (of idols) and stands as the source of all. He appears in the form of a unique idol and stands as the destroyer of the evils and sorrows of His devotees. These are the main qualities we find enumerated respectively in the Ten Tens of the Tiruvāymoḷi.

Various other qualities are also ascribed to Him in many places. Īṣvara takes many incarnations in order to help the good and

to punish the wicked. In order to be accessible easily to all, He descends to their level. He forgives the mistakes of his devotees. It is his virtue to mingle with all without rejecting anybody on the ground of unfitness. Whatever is offered by his devotees even though it be very insignificant, He accepts with full satisfaction. He is the sweet and proper medicine for the ills of samsāra. Like water He Himself goes to bless them according to the nature of the souls or jīvas. He gives the experience of bliss to His devotees in such a way as to enable them to receive it without any hardship or difficulty. He is so liberal as to consider Parama Bhakti and Parigaṇanā (*i.e.*, the state of intense devotion and simply saying a number which may casually refer to Him) as on an equal footing while he gives His blessings.²⁹

He is all powerful to give whatever is wanted. He is the cause not merely of all the worlds but also of all the other Gods. He sleeps in a wakeful state (conscious state) on Ananta-a serpent—in the Milk Ocean, contemplating always how to help beings who are wholly dependent on Him. He has “Tirumakaḷ” - the all graceful mother as His consort.³⁰

He is the life of all lives. He has graceful eyes like lotuses. He is the chief of all eternal souls. He comes in the form of arcā—idol—as people consider Him to be in their hearts. He stands ready always to show the good path to others and to help them³¹.

He takes many incarnations such as Trivikrama, Vāmana etc., to redeem the world and to establish virtue after destroying evils. He even begged of Bali three feet of land coming as a Dwarf. He stands on the Hill of Tiruveṅkaṭa so that both the dēvas of the heavens and the people on the earth can come to Him easily.³²

He is responsible for giving the five senses and the body to Jīvas. He wanted that Nammāḷvār should live in this world in order to sing Tiruvāymoḷi which is liked by him and is also useful to people on the earth.³³

29. Tiruvāymoḷi — First Ten

30. Ibid — Second Ten

31. Ibid — Third Ten

32. Ibid — Fourth Ten

33. Ibid — Seventh Ten

When Āḷvār offered his soul to Īṣvara in order to show his gratitude, He felt as if He had received a new thing which was not His own and so His joy knew no bounds. As Āḷvār attained the status of Sītā Dēvi on account of his qualities, Īṣvara became more loving towards him and stayed in his heart and like a lover felt happier in seeing him continuously and in this way made Āḷvār experience bliss.³⁴

He was born as the son of Daśaratha. He was a cowherd. He is the wayside friend. He is always ready to give heaven (svarga) to his devotees. He is the only independent ātman (Paramātmān). He has relation with the souls. Destroying the ills of Jivās is his nature.³⁵ What Īṣvara did for Āḷvār is mentioned here in the hope that He will do it for every soul and so it is (a part of) His nature.

The spiritual status of Āḷvār seen through the Tens of Tiruvāymoḷi

1. God gave Āḷvār the knowledge in the form of devotion (Devotion as an intellectual love), after driving all his ignorance away. Then He entered into his heart and caused the removal of all his sins and virtues and stayed there steadfastly so that Āḷvār may not forget Him. So, Āḷvār experienced (enjoyed) God like drinking nectar and attained knowledge about God. That experience was of a unique nature and so he could not enjoy it alone. He found that others were not interested in it. So he wanted to turn them also to his view and for that purpose, he began to preach to them.

2. The effect of that nāna or Knowledge is to attain salvation or Mōkṣa. Āḷvār tried to get salvation and so God offered him the supreme abode. At that stage Āḷvār thought that whatever may be His gift, that should be given of his own accord and with the feeling that He is the beneficiary, by that. Then Āḷvār confirmed that salvation for him is to attain the feet of God and be of service to Him there.

3. The purpose of mōkṣa is to experience God and to do selfless service to Him. Āḷvār enjoyed Him first and found

34. Tiru. — Eighth Ten

35. Ibid — Tenth Ten

out with His help that the reason for his inability to do it thoroughly was God's unlimited nature. He desired to do all kinds of services to Him at all times (eternally). He extolled the omnipresent quality of God. He became pleased in his heart and on account of that began to dance. Owing to that excess of joy he attained a stage of consciousness in which he would consider even the servants of the devotees of God as his chiefs. Āḷvār began to enjoy God through his various sense organs. The thirst for enjoyment attained its climax. Āḷvār asserted that he was not a poet who would sing on mortal men. But he was a Divine poet who would sing on God only. He became devoid of all sorrows and pains and was immersed in the ocean of bliss that is the experience of God.

4. As the Āḷvār desired, God made him experience all kinds of His forms and actions past and present. God began to love him more on account of the intense longing on the part of Āḷvār. God always delights in playing the game of 'hide and seek' with his devotees. He hid himself for some time. At once Āḷvār became mad after Him. He cried after Him requesting either to come over there so that he could see Him or to take him to His place. His request was granted by the Lord coming into his sight. Āḷvār imagined that he had attained God. As an effect of that—the attainment of the final goal—Āḷvār gave up attachment to other Gods and also to his own self and things which were related to it. He got Vairāgya - abandonment of desires - in life in this world, in wealth and even in the experience of soul.

5. The abandonment of desires by Āḷvār resulted in his intense love for God. It attained such a state as to make his heart burst. It exceeded its limits so as to be referred to by his neighbours as madness of love—(கழிய மிக்கதேறற் காதல்). Āḷvār asserted that all the marvellous deeds done by Lord were done by him. He attained a state of mind in which he could not be away from the Lord even for a minute. Because of the yearning for the object which gave excessive joy, the soul and mind were moved and the body became emaciated. The thought of God entered into his mind and began to melt even his soul. In this manner Āḷvār attained the intense devotion for God and also the association of His devotees.

6. Due to this intensity of love Āḷvār attained a state of mind which did not allow him to adopt any other means except God. He learnt from God that His feet alone are the means. He firmly clung on to this idea and sent errands to God informing Him of his intentions. The belated arrival of the Lord made him sulky. And again the captivating beauty of the Lord made him forget that and he became united with the Lord. As he desired, he got the enjoyment of the Lord. Āḷvār thought that he should do prapatti or self surrender at least once giving up all the other means *i.e.*, considering even the prapatti not as a means; and that God alone is the only means - or Siddhōpāya. So he gave up all which were described as upāyas and upēyas in ancient purāṇas and also by ancient seers, such as mother, father, wife and few others, (2) all kinds of riches and (3) doing karmas and performing rituals. These were regarded as imitations of causes and effects (upāyas and upēyas). Āḷvār even donated paramapata and other heavenly abodes as rewards to God's devotees. He recoiled even from associating himself with the worldly objects, and their mere mention would cause his destruction. He considered God only as his father, mother, food, wealth and everything else. He cried while thinking of Him. He saw the Lord on the top of the Veṅkaṭa Hills and surrendered himself at His feet considering them as the only means to attain salvation. This is the meaning suggested in the first part of the 'Dvayam' one of the secret mantras of Vaiṣṇavites.

7. Āḷvār's nature was that he could not be separated from the Lord. But the Lord made him live with his body surrounded on all sides by the five senses which would drag Āḷvār away from Him (God). Understanding this state of affairs, Āḷvār cried with sorrow. As he had adopted God as the only means for his salvation, he had nothing to do except to cry out till he got his object of attainment. He laid the blame on the Lord Himself. Āḷvār attained a state that was ineffable and incommunicable. He lost himself in the Lord and was beyond the stage of consolation. The Lord showed him His deeds of valour to console him. That feeling of consolation once again disappeared when the thought occurred to him that the worldly people were losing such a fine experience. So, again he began to lament. There came a momentary appearance of God before him and that tortured him very much. In this way the woe of separation existed once in an

intensive form for some time and then was at a low ebb. Even though there were no defects either on the side of Āḷvār in surrendering, or on the side of God in showing mercy to Āḷvār who had surrendered to Him, yet Āḷvār had to suffer in the world. He asked God the reason for this. He replied that it was not because of his past karmas that Āḷvār was allowed to stay in this world still, but it was done willingly by God to have songs by Āḷvār for the benefit of Him and His devotees.

Āḷvār became immensely pleased on hearing this. He thought of giving something in return to show his gratitude to God. The only thing one can give to God is his own self. But Āḷvār understood at once that it was also not possible because the self or soul was the property of God. Thus, he attained a state of confusion and perplexity. Then he desired to recite his Tiruvāymoḷi among the band of God's devotees, the Vaiṣṇavites in Tiruvāṇṇai a sacred place where the Lord resides with His consort for the benefit of the whole world. This was the service desired by Āḷvār. At this stage the Lord offered him his paramapata - the supreme abode - but Āḷvār had no mind to accept it. Even the mere mention of it was unbearable to him. He had completely forgotten the group of devotees who recite the Sāma gāna in the paramapaṭa.

That was the determination and firmness Āḷvār had in his ideal.

8. Āḷvār desired to see God in flesh and blood with his physical eyes. Failing in that effort he became desperate and began to suspect His qualities of pāratantṛya (*i.e.*, dependent on his devotees to act as they commanded) and prakāritva (*i.e.*, Having all the objects of the universe as His body, He dwells inside all the beings and things), and feared when he remembered the sufferings and sorrows that came on account of the defects in this worldly life. These feelings of despair, doubt and fear, made him forget his service of singing Tiruvāymoḷi. At this stage, perhaps, the Lord reminded Āḷvār of the incident that he had been taken as His devotee to sing his Tiruvāymoḷi. In that rejoicing Āḷvār forgot himself, and gave his self as a gift to God. God felt overwhelmingly rejoiced to get the self from Āḷvār though the thing he got was His own. This made Him grow bright and bigger in stature. Āḷvār in a mood of ecstasy sings of Him as follows:

‘என்னுயிரை அறவிகுசெய்தனன் சோதி!
 தோன்களாயிரத் தாய்! முடிகளாயிரத்தாய்! துணைமலர்க்
 கன்களாயிரத்தாய்!
 தாள்களாயிரத்தாய்! பேர்களாயிரத்தாய்.
 தமியனேன், பெரிய அப்பனே!’³⁶

Āḷvār attained the status of Sītā Dēvi in the following respects:

1. In giving up the attachment to the place of birth.
2. In singing the praise of the Lord.
3. In admiring and enjoying the prowess of the Lord.
4. In experiencing the pangs of separation.

The Lord became pleased on seeing these qualities in Āḷvār and so entered into his heart and stayed there, so that he might experience or enjoy him. In order that Āḷvār may not run away from Him thinking about his unworthiness, the Lord showed the greatness of the Soul to Āḷvār. The nature of Soul is (1) It is different from the body, (2) Its essential nature is knowledge (ñāna), (3) Just like pirāṭṭi (Sītā Dēvi), it exists solely for the fulfilment of the purpose of God and not for itself, (4) Its dependent nature extends not only to God but even to His devotees and their devotees also. Āḷvār became a contemplator of the essential nature of Soul.

9. The effect of knowing the essential nature of Soul was the desire to enjoy God incessantly. The idea of gradual attainment of enjoyment in due course became unbearable. Āḷvār began to beg of the Lord that either he should be taken over there to do service to Him or He should go over to him to give him the benefit of serving. He concentrated on the same thought only. He longed to see Him. On seeing things which reminded Him, his agony increased much and so he tried to put an end to himself. He cried owing to unbearableness. His heart began to melt at the very thought of the virtuous qualities of the Lord; the mind of Āḷvār became concentrated on Him only and the yearning for God acquired a momentum and became irrepressible and unbearable, and at that stage the day of salvation was fixed by God as the day of death. So Āḷvār attained an exceedingly joyous state of mind.

10. Then at the stage of ascending to Vaikunta through the path of light (Arcirādi mār̥ga), he engaged the Lord who is like a showering cloud, as his companion for his journey. He demanded that He should not leave him even for a moment. He became sure that there would be no hindrance to the attainment of his goal and the pain and sorrow of samsāra would not follow him thereafter. So just as a person in his death bed reveals all his hidden treasures to his sons, Āḷvār also tells people all that he wants them to do for their salvation.

The Preachings of Āḷvār

1. At the outset itself Āḷvār tells people all that they should give up and the defects of those objects and the manner of giving them up. In the same way he tells the nature of the Lord who is the only object to be attained; and the quality He possesses and the manner and mode of offering their souls (selves) to Him. For this, one should do Bhajan (or prayer - chanting the name of the Lord). The Tirumantra is the main source for it. So He gives that mantra in a verse. To perform bhajan - singing of the praise of God - one should know the auspicious qualities of the Lord. So Āḷvār begins to describe His various qualities and informs people that to reach Him is easier and lovelier. If He is prayed He will remove all the hindrances on the way and offer real and permanent benefits. The effects of one's past karmas which are capable of destroying soul will perish the instant one attempts to pray to Him. Just as he received the nāna in the form of bhakti from the Lord, Āḷvār also enjoins people to follow the path shown in the Gītā by Krishna. He wants them to understand that the Supreme Being is only one and asks them to love Him without expecting anyother reward from Him. Thus Āḷvār on account of his grace for all human beings removes ignorance from them and preaches them to have knowledge and love for God and makes them follow the path of prayer or bhajan.

2. Āḷvār speaks about the glorious qualities (paratva aspect) of God who is the object of attainment by all. In order to prove His upremacy, Āḷvār quotes the very words of *Brahma* and *Rudra*, praying to *Nārāyaṇa* that He is the supreme God.³⁷ Secondly

he quotes another instance from Mahābhārata wherein it is said that Arjuna once saw the very same flowers on the head of Rudra or Siva which he placed on the feet of Nārāyana on an earlier occasion.³⁸ He describes the pains and sorrows of the samsāra, the blissful nature of the object of attainment and the loveliness of the means to be adopted. After that Āḷvār requests everybody to contemplate on the qualities of God and plunge into them. To be of help for that, he enjoins on the people not to waste their youthful energy by doing prohibited acts but to go to Mālirumcōlai Hill wherein the Lord lives, and to offer prayers to Him in thought, speech and deed, namely praising Him in songs, prostrating before Him and going round His hill etc.

3. Here Āḷvār describes the extreme simplicity of the Lord in the form of idols. The accessibility expressed earlier in the form of incarnations becomes a supreme quality when compared with this. Āḷvār tells people that the Lord is waiting ever ready to help and to take them in the path of light and so why one should praise mortal men who are mean and low, and thereby degrade himself also. There is the Lord omnipotent to give whatever is demanded from Him. He will give the soul His own status. Mentioning all these qualities Āḷvār requests bards to take to singing His praises. God will give release or Mōkṣa. So Āḷvār says "Give up the mean service of singing of mortals and turn to serve God by your songs and that is the only service which is suitable to the essential nature of Jīvas."³⁹ He is the poet of the Lord. Likewise, he wants others also to become the poets of God to sing His praises only in their poems.

4. Āḷvār who attained the state of Vairāgya (abandonment of worldly desires) in the first instance establishes the meanness of worldly wealth, unstability of swargas (heavenly abodes) and the limited nature of self experience (Kaivalya). Then he explains the unworthiness of the act of propitiating the evil spirits or wild Gods with the offer of flesh and toddy. After that he explains the ignorance, inability and nature of seeking help from the Supreme Being of the other unreal gods (apēchatvam), and the darkness enshrined in the external religions and the Vedic religions of a

38. Tiruvāymoḷi. 2-8-6

39. Ibid. 3-9-3

crooked nature. He tells the people “O Men! you have prayed to other gods and known the benefits of your prayer. Even after learning from the śāstras the various acts of the Supreme Being you did not get the clear idea that He is the only Being to be worshipped and attained. The cause of it is the Prakṛiti which He has given. You should know that to get relieved from that is possible only through the means of the grace of His feet. You try for that. To do selfless service to Him is the only goal of life.” By preaching like this Āḷvār tries to make others also attain the state of abandonment of worldly pleasures that he had attained and to create an interest for them in their pursuit of God.

5. Many eternal souls and freed souls came to this world from Vaikuntha and from other places to see Āḷvār who had reformed the world through his divine songs and also to see those who were converted to be the devotees of Viṣṇu by Āḷvār. With great satisfaction Āḷvār began to bless them and again to search and find out if still there were any wicked persons who did not become devotees of Viṣṇu like the father who did not believe in the good advice of his worthy son Prahlāda and the brother who did not heed to the words of advice of his younger brother Vibishāṇa. He advises them as follows:

“The servants of God have spread all over the land in order that the ills of deadly diseases, enmity and want of food and such other defects of the bad times might be eradicated. You go to them so that you can lead a good life. If you have no capacity to go so far and know the supremacy of Lord Nārāyaṇa on account of the love you possess for your own God, you do atleast this. You understand that the Gods you pray to now have also been given that status by Nārāyaṇa. They worshipped Him and attained that power and status. If you follow the same method followed by your Gods then you will not be affected by the defects of Kali-yuga (Bad Age).”

Thus Āḷvār made them devotees of Lord Viṣṇu. Even those who turned to the path of devotion earlier and felt pleasure in the company of God's servants were in the state of having conviction in the means. For them Āḷvār, who stands in the final stage of attainment, emphasises the uniqueness of the object of attainment, i.e., God.

6. Āḷvār did prapatti to God earlier. He surrendered himself to God. But he was preaching to people to follow the path of devotion (Bhakti as a means to attain Him). For those who felt that to have bhakti as a means is opposed to the essential nature of soul and also that path requires many qualifications on the part of the follower and on that account difficult to follow, Āḷvār gives his advice as follows. He says 'God took me under the shade of his feet; except his feet we have no other refuge.' He mentions what he did actually: 'I attained to His feet with a willing heart.' Thus Āḷvār makes clear by his preaching and practice his conviction or determination in Siddhōpāya (the means that already exists) as his means and end.

7. For those who accepted his teaching and stood steadfast following Siddhōpāya - God as the only means, Āḷvār in a pleasing mood gives his advice as follows, which is not contrary to what has been said earlier. The extreme limit of prāpyam *i.e.*, object of attainment is Tiruvāṇṇai which is a delightful place where God resides. He, in that arcā form - in the form of an idol—is the extreme limit of prāpakam or means of attaining the goal. Thus Āḷvār reminds them to keep this in mind.

8. Then, for those who adopt Āḷvār's way implicitly he says that they need not have two objects one as upāya and another as upēya, what is said as upēya - or object of attainment can be adopted as upāya or means also. He asks them to consider the Divya Dēsa which is capable of destroying sorrows, as the only means and end.

9. Āḷvār attains a stage when the day of his release has been fixed. So, on account of his boundless grace towards the people of the world he begins to preach even for those who had no knowledge whatsoever. He tells them that all their relatives, children and wives have no true love for them. God is the only relation who helps in times of danger. He is the protector. He is the loveliest and the most delightful. He is the only right means and end as well. And so let all the living beings in the wide universe understand that He is the Siddhōpāya—The only means which is already present.

For those who are not fortunate enough to have such a confidence in God, and so defective in knowledge to adopt that method,

Āḷvār prescribes another way *i.e.*, the Bhakti Mārga with all its accessories or aṅgās such as praying to him by offering flowers both in the evening and the morning etc. This means takes one who follows it assiduously to the final goal. But that is a long and laborious process. Further that is open to one or another of the three higher castes of the Hindu society. So for those, who could not follow that path, Āḷvār prescribes the way of prapatti or self surrender. It is a delightful way. Every one is qualified to follow that and further it surely leads one to salvation at the end of one's life. (Siddhōpāya is also called as prapatti sometimes. The difference between these two is positively this. In the former God is held as the sole means to attain Him. In the latter the prapatti becomes a means to attain Him. So this is considered not so superior as the former). For those who feel doubtful about its efficacy for the reasons that the means is simple, and at the same time its effect seems to be very great and there are very many powerful hindrances also, Āḷvār advocates some other way also. For those powerless and poor people he prescribes the chanting of God's name or the name of his Divya Dēsa daily, which will destroy all sorrows and pains of life in this world.

Those who are unfit even for such an act on their part *i.e.*, to repeat the name with single-mindedness or to give a song on God—are asked to sing this particular portion of the 'verses of Āḷvār' and to prostrate before the Lord. In this way just as Kṛiṣṇa preached in the battle field all kinds of ways suitable to individuals, Āḷvār also advises people when the object of attainment is within his sight.

10. In the First stage, Āḷvār advised his own mind to bow down to God and drive away ignorance. Then he called upon his friends who were like his mind and told them what they should do. He started with an account of the path of devotion in the beginning of Tiruvāymoḷi⁴⁰ and now as he has practically come to the end, he concludes it by mentioning the effect of following that path of devotion, which is to attain to the feet of God. A few more correspondences are also found in the first Ten and the last Ten which is under consideration now. As God hastens to take Āḷvār to His place in the Paramapada and also to make his

preaching interesting to the people, Āḷvār explains very briefly the way of praying to God with the three karanās, and gives them to us written as if on a handbook for easy reference.

For poets who enjoy the Lord like him and do service to Him, Āḷvār reminds that they should guard themselves from the various virtues of Lord, otherwise they may plunge into them and lose their lives.

God in the first instance prepared the mind of Āḷvār to be fit enough to attain his abode and so decided not to allow him to be in this world any longer. So He went up to make his house ready to receive Āḷvār. And before the return of God, Āḷvār had made the whole world perfect by his teachings and was ready to go with Him after finishing all his duties here on earth. God's intense love towards Āḷvār extended upto all the parts of his body and He became intoxicated with love and showed all the delight in experiencing the body of Āḷvār because it was his last body. He forgot even the urgency and entered into the body of Āḷvār with all His paraphernalia. Such was His mad love for Āḷvār. Āḷvār explained to Him the unworthiness of the body and requested Him to relieve him from the body and succeeded in it. (Here through an imaginary interesting conversation our author very clearly brings out the reasons for God's action of giving salvation to human beings). Mentally Āḷvār became aware of his journey to paramapada in the path of light. He imagines that the beating of drums, and blowing of bugles are being done in honour of his journey. He speaks about it in the Tiruvāymoḷi.⁴¹ Āḷvār craved intensely to attain that stage physically also. As if the intensity of the love of God was far greater than the Love of Āḷvār, He came and united with Āḷvār and made him enjoy Him (the Lord) to his satisfaction. Even Āḷvār says in his last verse that all his desires and thirst have been quenched by God. His name is *Hari*. As the word means the destroyer (of sins), God wiped off all the sins and sorrows of Āḷvār. This he expresses to all in the last Tiruvāymoḷi.

A Few Doubts Cleared

1. Without any cause or even without a request Lord removes ignorance and gives *nāna* in the form of devotion to Āḷvār and

41. Tiruvāymoḷi. 10-9

He finally gives him the object which he wished for. It is also said that only the boundless mercy of God is the cause for it. On the part of Āḷvār in his first verse in Tiruviruttam he puts forward a request to God that his false knowledge, wicked conduct (actions) and the unworthy and dirty body should be removed from him. Āḷvār himself says in the last verse of Tiruvāymoḷi, that he has attained what he desired earlier. In these circumstances, a question is raised why Āḷvār was not favoured with the blessings of the Lord earlier itself?

The reasons are,

1. God's intention was that Āḷvār should reform the world by his teachings, which He was incapable of doing by His various efforts.
2. If the desired object of salvation or release is granted immediately ordinary common folk may think that prapatti is like a poisonous lake and so, for fear of its consequences may not come to Him at all for any request.
3. To fulfil the task of singing the praises of God for the enjoyment of Himself and His devotees.
4. Those who adorn themselves with sweet smelling roots of plants or creepers, in their extraordinary desire for smell, will use the roots even without removing the mud that will be sticking to them. Just like that God had an intense longing even for the body of Āḷvār and so He kept him in this world.

These four reasons may be adduced. But they are not important. The following only is of paramount importance. God waited till Āḷvār attained the suitable stage to receive His blessings. In other words He waited till the increase of the Ārtti or intense desire of Āḷvār became fit to receive His blessings. This is the main reason. (It has to be remembered that it was not the cause for Lord's offer). This is obvious from the fact that in 20 contexts or places we find Āḷvār speaking as 'இனி' and 'இனி' meaning now or hereafter. There was desire while he sang the first verse. But it gradually grew and became (Paramārtti) or limitless desire as to make him fit for attaining the final object of mōkṣa.

2. Usually three stages of bhakti are mentioned; they are parabhakti, parajñāna and parama bhakti. Does Āḷvār also undergo all these stages? If so where do they appear in his verses?

In some places we find Āḷvār mentioning that he has seen God *Kaṇṇan*. In many other places he also mentions that he has not seen Him and so he is a sinner. These statements seem to be contradictory. We should take the first one as referring to the mental stage of Āḷvār and the second one as referring to the desire to be united with Him physically also.

We find the words 'I have seen Him' occurring in ten places and 'I crave to see Him' in double the number of places and even more than that. This will show though Āḷvār was experiencing that para jñāna stage in his mind, he was in the state of para bhakti outwardly. This state of mind continues upto the verse⁴² wherein he says 'that the God in Tiruppēr would not disappear from his eyes in order that he may see and enjoy Him.' The parajñāna stage which was running all through in his mind attains its perfection when he says in the verse⁴³ that he was in the company of the eternally free souls who enjoy eternal bliss. This also refers only to the mental stage that Āḷvār attained. The final stage of parama bhakti was attained by Āḷvār in the end in the 'Muniyē Nānmukan' Tiruvāymoḷi wherein he speaks about his verses that they are the product of his extreme yearning for God *i.e.*, parama bhakti 'Muṭi nta Avā.'⁴⁴ So we see Āḷvār attaining to the unique state while he was in this world with his body. In the case of all the other souls this state is possible or attainable only after the giving up of this empirical body.

3. Where are the three stages of bhakti described and by whom?

Sri Krishna speaks about this to Arjuna while he was standing on his chariot. That teaching is in the form of *Gītā*.

He again explained these things to Sri Rāmānuja from a seat in Sriraṅkam called "Chērapāṇṭiyan." It is in the form of

42. Tiruvāymoḷi. 10-8-7

43. Ibid. 10-9-11

44. Ibid. 10-10-11

Gadya. In these two works the three stages are explained as follows:

Parabhakti is the state of —To be with God is delightful and knowledge. to be in isolation is sorrowful.

Parajñāna is the state of —To learn the essential nature, form, wisdom or clear knowledge. qualities and possessions of God very clearly as if seen actually with the eyes.

Parama bhakti (the super —To be in a state that non-attainment of essential love of God). God causes destruction.

4. We find in Tiruvāymoḷi that the various stages of devotion to God attained by Āḷvār are explained. The auspicious qualities of God are spoken of. It contains the preachings of Āḷvār. It deals mainly with the five truths of Vaiṣṇavism, *i.e.*, Arta pañchakam. Each Tiruvāymoḷi contains one idea as its main aspect; One Ten *i.e.*, Hundred verses have one central idea. What is the main important central idea contained in Tiruvāymoḷi in all its Thousand verses, is the question.

Avidyā is the cause for birth. That is destroyed by the *nāna* in the form of devotion given by the Lord. The Lord offers it without requiring any qualification on the part of the soul or Jīva. He does it purely on account of his unconditioned grace towards Jīvas. The very same unconditioned grace of Lord which creates devotion in the minds of sentient beings causes them to attain salvation or mōkṣa. This is the gist of Tiruvāymoḷi. In short the unconditioned and unlimited grace of God and its power are explained in Tiruvāymoḷi.

CHAPTER VII

MAṆAVĀḤA MĀMUNI—THE COMMENTATOR.

Sri Maṇavāḥa Māmuni (1370—1443 A.D.), the commentator of Ācārya Hṛdayam was the last one in the line of the Vaiṣṇavite ācāryas. Apart from this work, he has written commentaries on various other works also. They are:

1. The three Rahasya grantha's of Piḷḷai Lōkācārya who is none other than the elder brother of the author of this work.
2. Rāmānuja Nūṛṇṇantāti by Tiruvaraṅkattu Amutanār.
3. āṇasārappiramēya Sāraṅkaḷ by Aruḷāḷapperumānār and
4. The first 410 verses of Periyāḷvār Tirumōḷi.

He has written a commentary on Gītā which bears the title 'Tātparya Dīpam.' Further He has composed three original poetical works in Tamil. They are:

1. Upatēṣa Ratnamāla.
2. Tiruvāymoḷi Nūṛṇṇantāti and
3. Ārtti.

His works written in Sanskrit are (1) Dēvarāja Maṅgaḷam and (2) Yatirāja Vimśati on Sri Rāmānuja.

His original works and commentaries occupy a very high place. The four Rahasya granthas namely The Ācārya Hṛdaya, Sri Vacanabhūṣaṇa, Tattvatraya and Mumūksuppaṭi would not have been of any use to the world, but for the commentaries of Maṇavāḥamāmuni. The author of Ācārya Hṛdayam taught his ideas to a scholār 'Peṇṇār' by name. He in turn taught that to a noble man 'Āyi.' It is said that this commentator learnt it directly from Āyi and then wrote his commentary according to that.

Maṇavālar was born in a sacred village in Tirunelvēli District. It was called Āḷvār Tirunakari on account of the birth of Nammāḷvār in that place. Maṇavālar's birth is highly extolled by later scholars. It is said that on the day of his birth, clarity of thought came to Tamil learning and the various śāstras became brightened. Even dull headed men attained a superior status, the life of Rāmānuja took a new birth, the works of Āḷvār got a new light and became clearer and even the Lord Araṅkanāta was rejoiced to see him. The child was named Aḷakia Maṇavālan, the very name of Lord Araṅkanāta. He led family life for a few years and later on became a sanyāsin and dedicated himself to the service of Lord Raṅkanāta. At that time he was given the name 'Maṇavāla Māmuni.' He was initiated into Tiruvāymoḷi by his Ācārya whose name was Tirumalai Āḷvār. The latter was called Tiruvāymoḷi piḷlai on account of his love and devotion for Tiruvāymoḷi. As per his wish Maṇavāla Māmuni dedicated his life to the cause of popularising 'Aruḷicceyal.' His devotion to Sri Rāmānuja is well brought out in his work Yatirāja Vimśati which contains songs in his praise. He was also called by the name Yatīndrapravaṇa. It is said that Maṇavāla Māmuni was the reincarnation of Sri Rāmānuja himself, and he wrote a few works in Tamil in order that the defect that he did not write any book in Tamil in his earlier life might be rectified.

He spent the major portion of his life in Sriraṅkam itself. When he first went to Sriraṅka, Piḷlai Lōkācārya had already attained mukti. So he went to the place where he lived and paid his respects. He praised the place where Lōkācārya had lived as 'the place which produced the Rahasyas.'

Once he toured the northern parts of Tamilnad and then stayed at Kāñchi for about a year, lecturing on the Sri Bhāṣya of Sri Rāmānuja. On a later occasion he undertook another tour of the southern parts and during that tour he stayed at Āḷvār Tirunakari for a longer time. It is said that during that time Maṇavālar met Āyi Swamikaḷ of Tirunārāyaṇapuram and learnt many intricate meanings of Ācārya Hṛdayam, specially for the Sūrṇai No. 22 which contains reference to the Rahasya and its meaning. There is an anecdote that during that time some miscreants set fire to the house where he stayed, But fortunately nothing untoward happened. Maṇavālar was merciful towards them and pleaded

with the king not to punish them. Through his efforts a few repairs were carried out in the temples at Āḷvār Tirunakari and Tirukkuṇkuṭi.

After returning to Sriraṅkam he used to deliver lectures on Tiruvāymoḷi. He explained the commentary 'iṭu' daily. The series lasted for a year. It is said that this was done on the express wish of Lord Raṅkanāta and so Sri Raṅkanāta along with his consort attended the discourse daily and on the last day as a mark of respect and also to show his gratitude to his ācārya, the Lord appeared in the form of the son of a priest and read a verse (Taniyan) in praise of him. It begins as 'Sṛi saila.' This happened in the big maṇṭap at Srīraṅka. Thus Maṇavāḷa Māmuni is the only person who has got the unique reputation of being an Ācārya who was eulogised by the Lord also.

The Greatness of His works:

His style is simple, lucid and melliflous. It contains depth of meaning and is delightful. His knowledge of various śāstras helped him to write in a sweet style. Clarity in expression, devoid of any ambiguity is the main feature of his style that can be seen in all places. These are general features. Now we shall turn to the special feature of the work under our study.

Commentary on Ācārya Hrdayam:

He starts his commentary by giving a fine introduction which easily takes the readers into the work. In the same way for every sūṛṇai a brief introduction is given which is very helpful in understanding the succeeding sūṛṇai easily and thoroughly. The second speciality is the mention of the connection between the sūṛṇais. Where a continuous argument ends the commentator summarises briefly all that has been said earlier. This helps us to a great extent to keep in mind the ideas expressed earlier and to proceed further on. Thirdly he uses apt similes to make his ideas clear. Then we find for a few sūṛṇais the commentator giving more than one meaning. There he brings out the minute differences between the one meaning and another (a few such cases are dealt with separately in the later portion of this essay). In some places, for

a few words he gives two or three meanings and points out their distinction clearly (Ref: S.1. nīrmai). He points out the niceties in the constructions, meanings and beauties of words used. In the original work we find quotations taken from various śāstras of Sanskrit and Tamil. Not only the ideas occurring in them but also the words and even syllables have been used in this work. The commentator gives the full passages or ślōkas and also interprets them very beautifully. That shows his extensive and deep knowledge both in Tamil and Sanskrit. The Vaiṣṇava traditions and conventions are explained by the commentator. The expansion of meanings for compounds¹ and the clear and precise exposition of inner meanings wherever possible, are few more of the meritorious points to be mentioned here. The examples for the various statements made above will follow.

Apt and beautiful similes:

The following simile is found in the general introduction to the work. The Supreme Being, the Lord of the universe, appeared in the form of many incarnations in order to redeem the world from the evils and set it right in the path of virtue. He could not accomplish it fully. So he thought of another method. He wanted to manifest Himself in a suitable person among the living beings so that he may carry out his reformation of the people easily and thoroughly. He was on the look-out for a capable person for that and found him out in Āḷvār. For this a simile is given. The hunters in the forest, to catch a wild animal, will use a tamed one. By showing an animal of the same kind they will attract the wild beast and if it approaches they will deceive it to fall in their trap. This is the usual method adopted to catch wild beasts. That is cited here as a simile for what the Lord did to bring the worldly people to his way through the form of Āḷvār.

A very fine and apt simile is given in sūrṇai 21. That describes the four qualities of the soul and the difference between them. Śēṣatva and pāratantrya are the first two essential qualities the soul possesses. The people who follow the path of śāstras understand that śēṣatva or the serviceability is the essential nature of

3. Vide AH. S. 99 commentary

the soul or ātman whereas the people who follow the path of Tiru-mantra understand pāratantrya or the complete dependence on God as the essential nature (Swarūpa) of the soul or ātman. The commentator differentiates between these two qualities. He says that the one is the state which is capable of being used as God wishes. The other is actually being used for his service as He desires. To make the idea clear the commentator brings in a simile that serves the purpose fully. The simile is this:

‘கட்டிப்பொன் போலே சேஷத்வம்; பணிப்பொன் போலே

பாரதந்தர்யம்’

The śeṣatva is like a piece of raw gold whereas pāratantrya is like the gold melted and made fit for making ornaments. By this simile the usefulness and the superiority of pāratantrya are brought out very clearly by the commentator. A few other places where we find similes used by the commentator are: (Sūrṇais 31, 86, 114, 115, 117, 123, 220 and 226).

For the marvellous way of introducing simile to make the idea in the sūrṇai crystal clear and also to add charm to the writing, the following may be taken as a suitable example. Sūrṇai 177 runs like this.

‘போக்ய பாக த்வரை தெளிந்த சந்தைக்கு முன்னிலுன்றிலும்

ப்ரகடம்’

This sentence gives the important or predominant quality that is found in the three places mentioned before the foot, which commences as ‘Teḷinta en Cintai’ in Tiruvāymoḷi.² That quality is ‘Bhōgyapākatvara’ i.e., the zeal or fervour shown in enjoying the object even before it became fit for enjoyment. The expression is not clear enough. After reading the simile given by the commentator, we find that expression clear and striking. The three places mentioned in the first foot of the above mentioned verse are Puḷiṅkuṭi, Varakuṇamaṅkai and Vaikuṇṭam. The Lord in these three places is represented as lying, sitting and standing respectively. What is the purpose behind it? Is there any idea in this kind of representation? Ācārya Hṛdayam points out that near those three places is the birth place of Āḷvār, Tirukkurukai

or Ālvār Tirunakari. Ālvār's experience of God is depicted as Mathura bhāva or the experience between a lady and her lover. That experience is not one sided. It is an enjoyment for both. The part of the lady or Ālvār becomes a passive one and it is for the Lord to take active part for the union. The Lord fervently hoped and longed for enjoying Ālvār. But Ālvār did not attain the fitness for it. That is why he is waiting around the place of Ālvār in expectation of his maturity.

To explain this the Commentator gives the following simile. "Just as a person with great appetite because of his zeal to eat even before the rice in the cooking pot becomes fit for eating, comes near and hovers round it by lying sitting or standing."

பசிகனத்தவன் அன்னம் பக்குவ மாதற்கு முன்னே

பதற்றத்தாலே

அதுக்கு அணித்தாக வந்து கிடப்பது இருப்பது நிற்பது

ஆமாப்போலே'

If one remembers this simile then there would not be any difficulty in understanding the idea expressed in the sūṛṇai by the term 'Bhōgyapākatvarā.' What else is the purpose of a simile!

One more example may be given to show his worldly knowledge conveyed through his use of a simile. In sūṛṇai 228 an imaginary conversation between Ālvār and God is depicted. As God could not give proper and convincing answers to the queries of Ālvār. He stood lowering His head down in shyness. At that moment beating of drums and blowing of bugles were heard. That was made by God in order to take Ālvār to his abode. It has been described in the penultimate Tiruvāymoḷi. This state is described by the Commentator very skilfully through the following simile:

“விழாக்களில் சடங்கு செய்வீக்கிற உபாத்யாயர் மந்திரம்

தோன்றிவிட்டால்

கொட்டச் சொல்லி வாத்திய முழக்கத்தாலே அதை

மறைத்து விடுமாபோலே”

In festivities rituals will be performed by priests. During that performance if they forget the mantras which are to be recited,

then they will ask the band group to play on their instruments and try to conceal their fault by that noise. In the same way it is pointed out here, that the Lord also tried to conceal his inability to answer Āḷvār's questions. In this we find the commentator who was an ascetic quoting an example which reveals the failings of the priests of society. The simile makes the passage interesting to read. There are any number of similes in his work among which only a few models were shown above.

The skill shown in the exposition of passages:

In sūrnai 56 while describing the speciality of the poetry of Āḷvār, the following expression finds a place: 'uḷḷi uraikkum Tirumāl' meaning Tirumāl who speaks or utters after careful thought. Maṇavāḷa Māmuni explains the expression as follows: Tirumāl, the God, possesses the unmixed or pure sātvic knowledge. Whatever he utters will be considered as the words of the sacred vedas. Yet He did not speak in haste. For, then other people might blame him that he spoke as if automatically without giving any thought to it. Having all these in his consideration, with great love and on that account with great care to create confidence in others, He speaks describing the Vedic path to the world. Secondly, in sūrnai 125 while comparing the state of Āḷvār with the state of Sītā Dēvi the expression 'மாயும்வகை விஷ சஸ்த்திரங்கள் தேடி' appears. This means the pirāṭṭi (noble lady) tried to get either poison or any other instrument to put an end to her life. The commentator explains the expression as follows: "He has imprisoned my life here in his palace. If the poison kills me that becomes a good death for me, because I will be relieved of all the troubles. Is there nobody to give me a bit of poison? Even the poison takes sometime to kill a person. Is there no one here who can supply a deadly weapon which can kill me immediately." Thus she tried to find out a method to kill herself.

Extensive Knowledge:

As stated earlier, for giving full passages with explanations even for the monosyllabic words found in the sūrnai,³ the sūrnai

which commences as 'irānenil' may be quoted as an example. There the words 'Nachā,' 'Vidi' and 'Ha!' are shown where from they have been taken and a detailed explanation is given for those passages (Vide Page 16).

Two or more meanings for Words:

In surnai 155 the description of the cloud is given. It is spoken of metaphorically. So, many expressions are used with two meanings there: They are clearly and precisely explained by the commentator. 'Lajjittu Veluttu oḷiṇṭu': The cloud will feel shy of not being able to pour rain still more. Because of its inability to help, it will become pale and hide itself. Similarly even the ācāryas will feel shy of not being able to give more knowledge to others. Because of that their faces will fade and become pale and they will shun appearing before the public.

Four kinds of Ācāryas are mentioned as belonging to this category. They are anpukūrum aṭiyavar, Uṇaiyiliṭātar, Puyarkai aruḷmāri and Kuṇantikaḷ Koṇṭal and such others. The explanation of two of these expressions is given below:

'Uṇaiyiliṭātar' refers to Tirumaḷicaippirān. He was known by that name because he fought for the supremacy of Tirumāl over other Gods and established it with the help of his sword without putting it into its sheath. He emphasises throughout his works only this. That is why he was referred to by that title.

Next the expression 'anpukūrum aṭiyavar' is taken as referring to the first three Āḷvārs. This term has been taken from Periya Tirumoḷi of Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār. The whole expression found there is as follows:⁴

'ஆங்குரும்பிக் கண்ணீர் சோர்ந்து அன்பு கூரும் அடியவார்'

Though this is used in a general way without referring anyone in particular it is taken as referring to the first three Āḷvārs. The commentator here gives the same meaning. How it came to denote that meaning is the question.

The first three Ālvārs namely Pēyār, Pūtattār and Poykaiyār have given three antādis each containing Hundred hymns. A careful reading of those three works will show that the expression here used to denote the three Ālvārs is fully justified.

Pēyār in his work, often speaks about attaining God's feet (aṭi cērutal). We find him doing so in the beginning, in the middle and in the end as well. So it is proper to refer to the devotee who speaks predominantly about 'aṭi cērutal' as 'aṭiyavar.'

Pūtattār begins his work by the well known line ('anpē takaliyā). He concludes his work again by referring to anpu. Thus one who mentions his excessive love or anpu to God is referred by the term 'anpukūrum aṭiyavar' a devotee whose love for God is in abundance.

Poykaiyār the third of the group mainly speaks in many places about his crying to God for his wasting many days in vain. He wept for the attainment of God. So it is proper to refer to him as 'Arumpic Kaṇṇīr cōrum Aṭiyavar' the devotee who wept on account of his love for God. That is why the first three Ālvārs were spoken of as⁵ 'ஆங்கரும்பிக் கண்ணீர் சோர்ந்து அன்பு கூரும் அடியவர்.'

'அடிதொழுது என்றதிலே வஸ்துநிர்ந்தேச நமஸ்கார ஆசீஸ்களுமுண்டு'⁶ This sūṇai points out that the qualifications the grammarians prescribe for the first verse of a Kāvya are found in Ālvār's Tiruvāymoḻi also. Then, one may ask whether Ālvār followed all the grammatical rules strictly. Is it not opposed to the idea expressed elsewhere that the verses of Ālvār were born spontaneously and he never had any previous plan to work out a treatise?

The commentator points out, that according to the grammarians the first verse of a treatise should contain three aspects—they are:

1. 'வாழ்த்து' a salutation.
2. 'வணக்கம்' .. prayer and
3. 'வருபொருள்' suggestion of the contents of the work.

5. Bhaktāmṛtam P. 5

6. AH. S. 213

In the first verse of Tiruvāymoḷi we find these three aspects:

1. 'eḷu' .. raise up or attain salvation is the salutation.
2. 'toḷutu' .. to pray refers to the prayer.
3. 'aṭi' the feet of the Lord. That is the object spoken of in this work.

Thus in the expression (aṭ toḷutu eḷu) which is in the first verse of Tiruvāymoḷi we find all the three aspects required of the opening lines of a good kāvya of those days by grammarians and scholars. Because Āḷvār sang by the grace of God these aspects were also formed naturally and not by any effort on the part of Āḷvār. This is evident from the word 'uṇṭu' used to denote their formation by the author of Ācārya Hṛdayam. Thus the use of the one word and its aptness is clearly brought out by the Commentator.

Further we will see how the commentator brings out the two different shades of meanings of the same passage in a very subtle manner. Eleven such instances in all are shown very briefly in the following pages:

Explanation of the different interpretations:

1. Sūṛṇai 76 - begins with the words Pēccuppārkkil.

“பேச்சுப் பார்க்கில் கள்ளப் பொய்ந்நூல்களும் கிராஹயங்கள்;
பிறவி பார்க்கில் அஞ்சாமோத்தும் அறுமூன்றும் கழிப்பனம்”.

The criteria for accepting books or for rejecting them are taken as two and so two interpretations are given to the above sūṛṇai on those two bases. The first interpretation considers *instead of the contents of the works, the language* in which they are written or *the caste of the authors* who have written those works as the basis for accepting or rejecting them.

In the second interpretation books which are *in Sanskrit language* and which have been written by high born or *high caste personages* are considered as the basis for accepting the works.

In either case what is not expected or desired comes into being. So the author proves by suggestion that only on the basis of the contents of a work it should be either accepted or rejected. By this the language fanaticism and the egoism of high birth are condemned by the author (and the paramount importance of Tiruvāymoḷi is established).

2. Sūṛṇai 101 explains the superior nature of the bhakti of Āḷvār. It ends as follows: 'சத்தா போகவிருத்தி உபகரணமாவதொன்று'. The devotion of Āḷvār makes him contemplate always on God. So it is like the cause of his existence. It kindles his desire to grow on and on, so it helps him in his enjoyment of God. It is the cause of his longing to do service without expecting any reward and so it helps him in his selfless service or Kaiṅkaryā. In this way it is expressed that his devotion is instrumental for his existence, enjoyment and selfless service.

In the second interpretation it is said that the vṛtti (selfless service) of Āḷvār becomes a cause for his existence and as it ultimately benefits the Lord it is an enjoyment for God. In this way the devotion of Āḷvār stands as the cause for Āḷvār's existence and also as an instrument for his selfless service which is an enjoyment for God (போகவிருத்தி உபகரணமாவது). In the second meaning the order of words has to be changed like this (சத்விருத்தி போகவிருத்தி உபகரணமாவதொன்று).

3. Sūṛṇais 102 and 103 deal with causes for the attainment of the state of parama bhakti by Āḷvār. It is expressed in sūṛṇai 102 that Āḷvār did not attain that state on account of the performance of karma, nāna and bhakti in his present birth. In sūṛṇai 103, it is taken as expressed that the cause for Āḷvār's bhakti was neither his efforts in his earlier births nor his performance of karma, nāna and bhakti in his present birth.

In the second interpretation the following is the difference or speciality that has been adopted. According to sūṛṇai 102 the performance of the three means i.e., karma nāna and bhakti in the earlier birth is not the cause for the parama bhakti of Āḷvār. Then a doubt may arise whether it would not have been caused by the performance of those means in this birth. That doubt is cleared by the second sūṛṇai 103.

The Commentator Sri Maṇavāla Māmuni points out that the first interpretation given above is more akin to the meaning found in the original copy (or paṭṭolai) of this work.

4. Sūrṇai 113: 'வரவாறில்லை வெறிதே என்று அறுதியிட்ட பின் வாழ்முதல் என்கிற சுக்குதம் ஒழியக் கற்பிக்கலாவதில்லை' In the former sūrṇais (107 to 112) it was explained that the spontaneous grace (unconditioned grace) of the Lord and not any qualification on the part of Āḷvār was the cause for the deification of Āḷvār or for the blessing conferred on Āḷvār. If it is accepted, a further question may arise why the grace which was there from the beginning began to work all on a sudden. There should be some reason for that. Is there no righteousness on the part of Āḷvār which can be attributed as the cause for the action of God? The above sūrṇai comes as an answer to that question.

Varavāṇillai	.. There is no cause that can be attributed to the coming in of God's grace on Āḷvār.
Veṇite	.. unconditionally he will bestow His grace.
enṇu aṇuti iṭṭapin	.. Thus Āḷvār declared with determination and so
Vāḷmutal enkiṇa	as Āḷvār has said about God that
sukṛudam oḷiya	He is the prime virtue for his lonely
Kaṇpikkalāva tillai	enjoyment, there is no other virtue that can be attributed or imagined as a cause.

In sūrṇai 107 it is explained that there were no causes on the part of Āḷvār even done unconsciously. Because if there were causes accidentally even, they would have been certainly mentioned by Āḷvār.

Sūrṇai 108 explains even if there was no such virtue as to merit the blessings of God, there might be some virtue due to which Āḷvār attained a good mind relieved of evils and was inclined to pray to Him. Even for the attainment of this state of mind God was the cause and not Āḷvār's virtue.

Sūṛṇai 109 explains this in the following manner. The nature of God is to bless people when they attain the state of parama bhakti. But He also blesses equally one who utters the number twenty six. Even this is taken as referring to Him and so He blesses that man. One may say that Āḷvār also might have behaved like that. It is not so; because Āḷvār himself says that even that qualification was not in him.

Sūṛṇai 110 says that Āḷvār did not even allow Him to come to his heart nor had a liking for Him in his heart. They have been done by God. That is evident in Āḷvār's verses.⁷

Sūṛṇai 111 says: As Āḷvār himself mentions elsewhere his mere mentioning of His name Mātavan and his dwelling place 'Māliṛuñcōlai Malai' made Him come and stay in his heart,⁸ why can this not be held as the cause of God's blessing on Āḷvār? These two acts and a few other similar acts cannot be said as capable of fetching such a glorious benefit. God who possesses unconditional grace might consider them as causes for blessing particular individuals but either in Āḷvār's view or as a matter of fact in any devotee's view they could not be said as deserving causes.

Sūṛṇai 112 mentions the imaginary arguments between Āḷvār and God and how the grace - Kṛpā - encircled God in order that He could not leave Āḷvār without blessing him. Then, in this stage only Sūṛṇai 113 is given.

As per the second interpretation the main difference is this only. The doubt why all of a sudden Āḷvār should be blessed with the grace of the Lord and why the grace should fall on Āḷvār alone leaving all the others, makes one feel that there should be some cause for it. This kind of doubt is raised in sūṛṇai 107 itself and sūṛṇai 108 to 113 (half portion upto - arutiyiṭṭapin) is taken as one sentence and as expressing the idea of Āḷvār. The commentator remarks that this second interpretation is in the same pattern as in the original copy of Ācārya Hṛdayam.

5. Sūṛṇai 162: In this the author expresses the predominant quality of God, residing in the form of arcā at Kuṛuñkuṭi. To

7. Tiruvāymoḷi 1-7-9 and 5-8-9

8. Ibid. 2-7-3 & 10-8-1

denote the place the author uses the word ‘Vaiṣṇava Vāmanam.’ The quality that shines in the deity there is ‘Vibhava lāvaṇyam.’

It is a speciality of the author to use the expressions taken from Tiruvāymoḻi in which the particular temple has been sung, to denote that place viz., (Maṇṇōr Viṇṇōr Vaippu, Uṇṇaiyil, Tennakar, Nannakar, Avvūr, Pukumūr, Mānakar, Niṇakar, Āyccēri, Tāyappati, Vaḷampukaḷumūr, Mōkanam, Maṇḷkaḷ Kaṭi yum Mayalmiku poḻil etc.).

The place is referred to as Vaiṣṇava Vāmanam because the name of the Lord there is Vaiṣṇava Nampi. There is an anecdote which explains that the Lord in that place once stood as a humble student before Sri Rāmānuja and learnt the meaning of Vēdānta and “attained Vaiṣṇavam” just as on an earlier occasion He took the form of Vāmana (the dwarf) to beg his own land from the cruel and powerful king Māvali. Further it is said in Purāṇas that the Lord there is the manifestation of ‘the incarnation of the vāmanam.’ So the author uses the word ‘vaiṣṇava vāmanam’ to denote that place where He resides.

Another reason also is given by the commentator to explain this usage. The ten verses sung on this place contain the following lines at the end.⁹

“குறிஞாளாயிரத்துள் இவைபத்தும் திருக்குறுங்குடியதன்
மேல்
அறியக் கற்று வல்லார் வைட்ணவர் ஆழ்கடல்
ஞாலத்துள்ளே”

This says that those who recite those verses, understand the meaning and follow them in practice and thereby become masters in the verses are called Vaiṣṇavites in the wide world. The place which is associated with those Vaiṣṇavites is called Vaiṣṇava Vāmanam.

“Vāmanan” means dwarf. Kuṇṇukuṭi can also be taken as kuṇṇiyavan kuṭi i.e., the dwelling place of a dwarf. In this sense also the name vāmanam is fully justified. Further, because the author is describing the beauty of the incarnation that shines

there, to be in consonance with it, he uses the word *vāmanam* which pertains to one of the incarnations of God. This is an appropriate usage and embellishes the sentence.

6. *Sūrṇai* 198: *Āḷvār's* preachings are intended for four kinds of persons. Even among them he advises often two kinds of people namely the worldly people and the Lord. To those two kinds of people, *Āḷvār* gives advice always on what they should do and what they should not do. In this *sūrṇai* for the expression, 'சாதன சாத்யத்தில் கலங்கும் ஜீவ ஈசுவரர்க்கு...ஹிதாஹிதங்கள் சொல்லுவர்' two different interpretations are given by the commentator. The first interpretation is this:

The *Jivās* are influenced by their *karmas*. So they are not in a position to know what the means is and also what the goal to be attained is. For those who are in that state of perplexity *Āḷvār* gives his advice in various ways as to what should be adhered to by them and what should be given up. *Īśvara* is also in the same state of perplexity on account of His excessive love towards *Āḷvār*. Owing to that He becomes doubtful whether *Āḷvār* will go away from Him thinking of his meanness or unfitness to go near Him. So *Āḷvār* advises Him that he would not go away from Him. He also instructs the Lord to give up His anxiety. He tells *Īśvara* about the means and the goal to be attained and also advises Him not to do what should not be done and to do what should be done. In this way to the worldly people who are in ignorance and to God, *Āḷvār* often gives advice regarding good and bad things. In the *sūrṇai* many places are indicated where *Āḷvār* advises both of them. With respect to the advice to the worldly people one place from the first Ten of the *Tiruvāymoli* and one place from the 10th Ten of the *Tiruvāymoli* are given. That includes all the other places that are found in between them. Some ten instances are shown with regard to the advice to the Lord. In all these instances the advice is not necessarily concerned with giving instruction about the means and the goal.

In the second interpretation both kinds of advice are taken as directed to make them firm in their means and goal (*Sādhana* and *Sādhya*). The advice for *jīvās* speaks about *bhakti* and *prapatti* which are the means to attain Him and about *Kaiṅkarya* which is the goal. The ten instances shown in the *sūrṇai* can be

interpreted to mean in the same way as conveying the means and goal to Īśvara who is in a state of perplexity. Here the perplexity should be taken as the anxiety, Īśvara had towards Āḷvār who is his sādhya or goal of enjoyment. In the former meaning it was taken as the jīvā's perplexity over the means and goal.

7. 'பகவத் பக்தபரங்கள் ஆச்ரயணவிதி சேஷங்கள்' 10

First meaning: In Tiruvāymoḷi we find a few parts dealing with the bhāgavatas or the devotees of God. In a treatise on God what is the necessity and propriety for such verses is the question answered here in this sūṇai.

There are many verses enjoining on people the need to think about God and contemplate on His auspicious qualities. The other hymns which speak about God's devotees should be considered as a part of the verses on God which will not become complete without them. These hymns exist only to make them complete. The verses on God are like the commands that say about Jyōtiṣtōma yajña and the others are like rules which insist on doing prayāja etc. It is a well known fact that if the prayāja rules are practised then only the performance of Jyōtiṣtōma will be beneficial. Thus the importance of devotees (bhāgavatas) is brought out in this sūṇai.

Second Interpretation: In many verses Āḷvār advises others. In those verses not only the qualities of God but also the qualities of Jīvas are explained. What is the need for them is the question. They should be taken as speaking about God who is the goal to be attained and about the jīvā who is the person who should attain that goal. Thus, even here the verses which describe the qualities of devotees form an important part of the rules which speak about the goal *i.e.*, God.

8. In sūṇai 220 which summarizes the contents of the second Ten (Hundred) of the Tiruvāymoḷi, for the following passage two different meanings are given by the commentator. 'ஆச்ரயணீய னுக்கு டூர்வோக்த பரத்வத்தை ஸ்தாபிக்கிற சகலபல பரத்வ காரணத்வ சேஷசாயித்வ ச்ரியப் பதித்வ செளலப்பயாதிகளைத் திண்ணன் அனைவதென்று வெளியிட்டு'

Meaning I: God is the object of attainment of all. In the first Ten of the Tiruvāymoḷi the 'para' aspect of God is spoken of. In order to establish that fully, Āḷvār explains in the second Ten the qualities *viz.*, giving all the benefits, to be the cause of all, to lie up on the serpent bed 'Anantan,' to be the beloved of Lakshmi and to be accessible to all by taking incarnations—in the two Tiruvāymoḷis 'Tiṇṇan' and 'aṇaivatu' aravaṇai. In both these Tiruvāymoḷis all the five aspects have been described and examples to that effect are shown by the commentator.

Meaning II: In the second interpretation among the five qualities mentioned above the first two are taken as described in Tiṇṇan and the other three qualities are expressed in Aṇaivatu aravaṇai. The commentator points out that this second interpretation is in agreement with the original manuscript of the book and this meaning is the most appropriate one. He gives three reasons for that which are acceptable to all.

9. Sūṛṇai 224 gives the substance of the sixth Ten of Tiruvāymoḷi. There appears the following passage for which two interpretations are given. 'புராண பெளராணிகர் தயாஜ்யாம் சமாக்கின சித் அசித்ப்ராமக ப்ராய்ய ஆபாசங்களை' The objects that have been rejected as imitations or as not real by purāṇas and paurāṇikas. There are both means and ends which have been rejected like that.

In the first interpretation purāṇam has been taken as referring to Bhaviṣyat purāṇa. Further, paurāṇika is taken as referring to Sri Rāmānuja who had spoken in the same manner of Bhaviṣyat purāṇa in his Gadya. From that a ślōka is quoted and explained in detail by the commentator.

In the second interpretation these two words purāṇa and Paurāṇika are taken as referring generally to all purāṇas and ancient people who followed the tenets of the purāṇās.

Here the commentator by way of explaining the ślōka taken from Saraṇāgati Gadya makes a few ideas clear. He interprets the ślōka in two ways.

The mother, father, wife, children, relatives, friends and the spiritual teacher or guru are spoken of as upāyas and upēyas.

They give pleasure by themselves and therefore they come under upēyas or the objects of attainments. They help to attain the real goal and in that respect they are considered as upāyas or means. But these are not real upāyas or upēyas but only imitations. In the same way all the wealth and riches including lands and houses are spoken of as upāyas in one sense and upēyas in another sense but all of them are not real ones. In the later portion of the slōka, karma ñāna and bhakti are mentioned as other upāyas or means. And the enjoying of swargalōka and state of Kaivalya or experience of the self are also mentioned as other upēyas or ends. These other upāyas and upēyas also should be considered as objects fit for rejection.

In the second meaning to the slōka, the commentator remarks that instead of dividing them into two as shown above all the objects including karma etc., Swarga and Kaivalya can also be said as non-real imitations of upāya and upēya when compared with the real upāya or upēya, God.

10. In surṇai 228, the following passage appears with two interpretations.

‘மாயையை மடித்து வானேதரக் கருதிக் கருத்தின்கட்
பெரியான வனை’

In the first meaning ‘Māyaiyai maṭittu’ is taken as the effort of Āḷvār. Āḷvār described the unworthiness of his body to God and requested Him to remove it from him. His request was granted and Āḷvār became proud of his action. In the second meaning ‘Māyaiyai maṭittu’ is taken as the action of God done of his own accord as He very much wanted to take Āḷvār to parama pada.

11. In the same sūrṇai in the later portion comes another-expression.

‘‘ஜீவப்ரகிருதி சைதன்யம் நீங்கும் விரத ஹேது;
அகமேனியில் அழக் கருக்கை அபிமாநி கருத்யம்’’

The meaning is this:

God thinks as follows: "The Jīva has knowledge. He is attached to Prakṛti or Nature. That knowledge of being attached to Nature causes him to go away from me. So the Jīva which is the intimate body to me is attached to Nature or prakṛti, which is dirt. As I am the lover of the soul, it is my duty to remove that dirt from the soul or ātma."

The second meaning:

"Prakṛti is in two forms. One is Jīva and the other is inanimate objects. The prakṛti which is Jīva has knowledge and that makes it draw back from me. Both the 'acit' and 'cit' are bodies for me. Among them, 'cit' is a more intimate body than 'acit.' So it should be my look-out to remove the dirt from the soul which is my intimate body."

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION.

This study may be concluded with an enumeration of the main ideas dealt with in the body of this work. The Introductory chapter deals with the circumstances under which Ācārya Hṛdayam came to be written and also with some of its features. The growth of the Maṇipravāḷa style in Vaiṣṇava literature and its need and function are discussed in the second chapter. A few special features of the style of Ācārya Hṛdayam are explained with illustrative examples. The third chapter deals with the author's view of the Tamil language and the devotional songs. It is observed that the author lays greater stress on 'the content' than the language in which the thoughts are expressed. A liberal interpretation of the caste system with particular emphasis on devotion as a means of spiritual elevation forms the subject matter of the fourth chapter.

The fifth chapter expounds the special features of 'Bridal mysticism' from the philosophical point of view. The sixth chapter is an account of the paths to salvation and particularly the prapatti Mārga. The second part of the same chapter deals with Āḷvār's method of attaining salvation and his teaching.

The commentary by Maṇavāḷa Māmuni on Ācārya Hṛdayam is an indispensable guide. Without it it is difficult to grasp the significance of Ācārya Hṛdayam. Therefore the special merit of the commentary is analysed in the last chapter. The commentary itself deserves special study.

Throughout the study and exposition of this great work Ācārya Hṛdayam I have felt a very stimulating sense of understanding and illumination. I have felt a keen sense of being in the midst of great and everliving minds. The terseness of the author's language in no way stands in the way of revealing the rich heritage of wisdom that will be an inspiration to readers in the centuries to come.

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APPENDIX—I.

Abbreviations used :

Tamil Books:

AH or S	Ācārya Hṛdayam—Sūrṇai.
Tiru	.. Tiruvāymoḷi.
Tiru. V	Tiruviruttam.
Periya. A.	.. Periya Tiru Antāti.
Periya. Tiru	Periya Tirumoḷi.
Peru Tiru	Perumāḷ Tirumoḷi.
Periāḷ Tiru	Periāḷvār Tirumoḷi.
Tiru. A I	Mutal Tiru Andāti
Tiru.A. II	.. Iraṇṭām Tiru Andāti
Tiru. A. III	Mūnṛām Tiru Andāt
Nān. Tiru.	Nānmukan Tiru Andāti.
Tirup.	.. Tiruppāvai.
Nācci Tiru	Nācciyār Tirumoḷi
Tiru. N	Tiru Neṭumtāṇṭakam.
Tiru. K.	Tirukkuṇṛntāṇṭakam.
C.M.	.. Ciṛiya Tiru Maṭal.
P.M. Peria Tiru Maṭal.
Tiru, M.	Tirumāḷai
Tirucca V.	Tiruic Cantaviruttam
Bhak	.. Bhaktāmirutam.
Aka Aru	.. Akapporuḷum Aruḷicceyaḷum.
Rama. Nūr.	.. Rāmānuja Nūṛṇṇandāti.
Āḷvār	Nammāḷvār.
Āḷvārs	All the twelve Āḷvārs.

Sanskrit Books:

Rama	.. Rāmāyaṇam.
Rama. Su.	.. Rāmāyaṇam Sundarakāṇṭam.
Bhar	.. Bhāratam.
Bhar. S.	.. Bhāratam Sānṭhi parvam.
Bhag	.. Bhāgavatam
Vis. P.	.. Viṣṇu Purāṇam.
Muk	.. Mukundamāla.
Aḷa. S.	.. Āḷavantar stotram.

English Books

Mys.	.. Mystics and Mysticism.
G.P.	.. Group prejudices.
I.C.C.	.. Indian caste customs.
Rahas	.. Rahasyatrayasāra.
Rahas. intro	.. Rahasyatrayasāra introduction.

(The numbers given in brackets refer to stanzas if not indicated by P.P refers to page; PP denotes pages; S denotes sūṛṇai; SS denotes sūṛṇais. If two or more numbers are given, the first one refers to the major portion and the later ones to smaller divisions or stanza).

APPENDIX—II

List of main works from which words and phrases are taken and used by Aḷakiyamaṇavālanāyanār.

Sanskrit:

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|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Rāmāyaṇam | Vālmīki |
| 2. Bhāratam | Vyāsar. |
| 3. Bhagavad Gītā | |
| 4. Bhāgavatam | Suka Muni. |
| 5. Harivamśa | |
| 6. Āraṇam | |
| 7. Upaniṣads | .. Taittiriya Muṇḍaka and |
| 8. Manusmṛti | Manu. [Kaṭaka. |
| 9. Viṣṇu purāṇa | Parāsara |
| 10. Padmapurāṇa | |
| 11. Kaiśika Purāṇa | |
| 12. Skāndam | |
| 13. Nārāyaṇānuvākam | |
| 14. Viṣṇu Dharma | |
| 15. Jitānt | |
| 16. Parāṅkuśa Aṣṭakam | |
| 17. Āḷavandār śtotram | .. Āḷavandār |
| 18. Saṣaṇāgati Gadyam | Rāmānuja |
| 19. Sriraṅka gadya | .. Rāmānuja. |
| 20. Varadarāja Stavam | .. Kūrattālvān. |
| 21. Sriraṅgarāja Stavam | .. Bhaṭṭar. |
| 22. Guṇaratna Kōśam | .. Bhaṭṭar. |
| 23. Bhaṭṭar's verse | .. Bhaṭṭar. |

Tamil:—

‘ Nālāyiram ’ including Rāmānuja Nūṟṇandāti.

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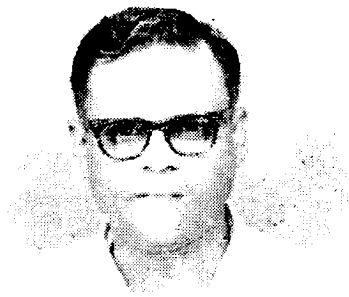
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